ESSER III Application - Stakeholder Consultation

Students
Principals gathered student groups and interviewed them in regards to learning loss and student supports. Principals interviewed a diverse group of students at each building and then submitted the student feedback back to the district office to aggregate. Students prioritized before and after school support during the school year, additional access to counselors and mental health supports, hiring of additional staff that work with at-risk students, and tutoring supports at school. Items not prioritized by students were preparing students to be choice-ready and preparing systems for distance learning. Students also asked for the services to be available at school for academic and social-emotional learning. FPS will continue to survey students over the life of the grant and make adjustments as needed. The priority areas identified by students include, but are not limited to, hiring an additional licensed teacher at all schools to assist with interventions for students, adding three social workers and three counselors to the district, virtual counseling services, and tutoring/mentors for at-risk students.

Tribes (if applicable)-MUST write NA if not applicable
All parents of Native American students received the district-wide newsletter article and survey link to provide feedback about use of ESSER dollars. In addition, the Indian Education Parent Committee was invited to a May 2021 meeting where the Indian Education Coordinator, Melody Staebner, shared more about ESSER funds and how they can be used to benefit Native American students. Attendees provided positive feedback to the district’s proposal, which was based on needs that were previously identified and were heightened due to the pandemic.

While the district currently has a mentor for Native American students, the mentor serves 90 students in the district and thus is only able to provide a limited amount of support per student. The additional mentor provided through ESSER III funds will ensure students are better served and provided more in-depth
support. The Cultural Specialist will help fulfill a need that exists within school districts across the country, which is for curriculum and classroom content to accurately reflect Native American history and to be culturally relevant and affirming for students. Melody serves on a national committee, the Alice Spotted Bear and Walter Soboloff Commission on Native Children, and has seen this need present in Native communities across the nation. This need was also identified by Fargo Public Schools students and parents during a needs assessment two years ago. Teachers in the district have also asked for more support integrating Native American culture and content into the curriculum; the district offers Professional Development to help fulfill this need, and the Cultural Specialist will provide further supports to help teachers receive job-embedded PD. Because of COVID-19, the need for mentors for Native American students and affirming classroom content has intensified, and ESSER III will help the district to meet these needs.

**Civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations)**

The special education director hosts regular meetings with special education families and added the ESSER funding as a discussion topic to their last meeting of the year. In addition, the special education director surveyed special education families on how to support student learning loss (199 families completed the survey). Parents feel that additional support is needed for students on IEP to help with learning loss. They felt the support options may vary from being additional time during the 21-22 school year to before-school, after-school, and summer supports.

The director of equity and inclusion and the administrator of alternative services have and are reaching out to families and district staff on supporting students who have experienced learning loss. The director of equity and inclusion and the homeless liaison are completing empathy surveys with families from various population groups. Families interviewed were willing to share the difficulties or hurdles to support their families during the pandemic. From these conversations, the district has concluded that we need to partner more strongly with families to improve student attendance. As a result of meeting with families from various population groups, we have embedded a district goal around attendance and outreach to families.

**Superintendents**

The superintendent, two associate superintendents, business manager, human resource director, and communication director meet weekly to review ESSER-related topics that include but are not limited to the ESSER budget, guidelines, feedback, input on funding, and requests. Updates and required approvals are regularly brought to the school board by the superintendent. We are aligning the district operational plan for 21-22 to the district strategic plan and reflecting on the learning loss experienced in the pandemic to create the district and building 21-22 School Improvement Plans. This includes proactive measures for the safety of our students and staff as we work to have them attend in-person learning. FPS staff is preparing the system to switch to a distance learning model if necessary for students experiencing an extended absence from school (isolation or close contact) or if a classroom needs to be shut down due to a COVID outbreak. We are currently working with the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH) on a close contact testing process. This process allows an identified close contact to stay in school if they have a negative BiNAX NOW test at least every other day in our schools.

**Teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions**

Suggestions for possible ESSER-funded projects have been taken from department heads, principals, building leadership teams, and staff. Outreach was sent to staff through district messaging and building newsletters. Staff were invited to submit feedback through the FPS newsletter, SchoolTalk, in spring of 2021. The newsletter article outlined initial ESSER plans and asked for further input through an online survey that was linked in the newsletter article. Three hundred and seventy-two staff members have completed the input survey. Town Hall meeting (Zoom meeting open to all staff) was also conducted during the second semester of the 20-21 to provide a place for the district office to answer questions and present on topics to all staff. The ESSER grant funds are reviewed and discussed regularly at the district department chair, teaching and learning department, and principal meetings. Each building is required to meet with its building leadership team to submit a request of up to $20,000 a year for building support customized to its site. The building leadership team must review their student data and come to a consensus on support for their building. For example, one elementary school has requested to hire a
sta paraeducator to support academic needs by pulling out or pushing into classrooms for extra student tutoring. Through an application process, all buildings and departments can submit requests for addressing learning loss to the district leadership. The superintendent meets monthly with the president of the teacher association to collaboratively work on school-related topics; ESSER funding has been discussed and will continue to be addressed in these meetings.

Stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students

In addition to being sent the district-wide newsletter article and survey link to provide feedback about use of ESSER dollars, the parents of students with disabilities received more personalized communications. The Fargo Public Schools Special Education department created an online form specific to caregivers of children with disabilities, and a Blackboard alert was sent to notify the caregivers of the form. The Special Education Family Educator Enhancement Team (parent advisory council) also alerted stakeholders to this form in their meetings. In total, 199 responses were collected, with respondents indicating a need for additional staffing and intervention materials.

The district’s English Learner leadership team met with the West Fargo Public Schools and Moorhead Public Schools English Learner teams. Three meetings were held to talk collectively about the Red River Valley EL needs. Discussion items included feedback from bilingual paraeducators, concerns from parents, and data points. These discussions helped shape the district’s use of ESSER III dollars to meet the needs of English Learners. Of note, the bilingual paraeducators proved to be an invaluable resource during the pandemic and provided much needed support to students and families. The work they started during the pandemic will be expanded in the upcoming school year thanks to ESSER III funds. The director of equity and inclusion has also worked with the director of English Learners to organize additional support for EL students to reduce learning loss.

The district’s equity and inclusion director also worked with the Fargo Youth Initiative group. The group ran a survey to better understand student views. The students were surveyed on their mental health needs, experiences, and perspectives of school culture and climate, including racism. Students were also provided an opportunity to discuss these topics in a wider context of our whole community, not limited to just their school buildings. Around 400 responses were collected from the public and private schools, and this data was made available to all high school principals for use when they made their school improvement plans. Principals are encouraged to always listen to ALL of their students to ensure we fulfill the Fargo Public Schools mission of educating and empowering ALL students to succeed.

The director of equity and inclusion and the homeless liaison are also completing empathy surveys with families from various population groups, as is described in the stakeholder question about civil rights organizations. Providing further attendance support for students has been identified as a top need to help underserved student groups.

ESSER III Approved Applications
- District confirms the approved ESSER III application will be posted to their website for public access. Yes

ESSER III Application

Prevention & Mitigation Strategies

Return to In-Person Instruction Plan:
LEA Website Link (copy from browser-must include http)
District confirms the plan will be updated at least every six months through September 2024 and will seek ongoing public input on the plan. Yes

Describe how ARP ESSER III funds will be used by the district to implement prevention and mitigation strategies.

FPS has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. The goal of FPS is to provide a healthy school environment to foster greater academic achievement and healthier lives for students and staff. ARP ESSER III fund will be used, when necessary, to assist with the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

(1) Universal and correct wearing of masks.
All students, staff and visitors must wear masks as a mitigation strategy, effective August 16, 2021.

(2) Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing.
In the 2020-21 school year, desks in classrooms were reconfigured to allow for social distancing as indicated for elementary and secondary grade levels. Elementary students remained within their cohorts throughout the day. Moving forward, FPS will continue to monitor the transmission of COVID-19 in school facilities and work to reduce transmittable moments as needed.

(3) Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
Stations are available throughout school buildings that include hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, antibacterial hand soap, and adult and child disposable masks. Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve, proper disposal of used tissues and proper handwashing are stressed to students and staff. Posters and signage will continue to be used throughout all school buildings.

(4) Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.
HVAC upgrades, water filtration system upgrades, and deep cleaning measures were put in place at each school.

(5) Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments.
The Coordinator of Safety and Emergency Management will continue to work with Fargo Cass Public Health regarding notification and contact tracing for future COVID-19 cases impacting FPS.

(6) Diagnostic screening and testing.
In coordination with public health services, COVID-19 testing continues to be available in the community. Initial screening of students, staff and visitors may be conducted at each building should the need arise.

(7) Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities.
In coordination with Fargo Cass Public Health, vaccination clinics were offered to all staff in March and April 2021, allowing staff members the opportunity to be fully vaccinated prior to the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Efforts are in place state-wide through public health and healthcare agencies to provide vaccinations to eligible individuals, including students.

(8) Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.
Children with disabilities who are unable to wear a mask do not have to do so.

(9) Coordination with state and local health officials.
FPS collaborates with Fargo Cass Public Health, which works directly with the North Dakota Department of Health and the CDC for our COVID-19 guidance.

Learning Loss

Describe how the district will use the mandatory 20% set-aside to address the academic impact of learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Fargo Public Schools will use evidence-based interventions to address the learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of our interventions are supported by "strong" evidence as defined by What Works Clearinghouse (Tier 1). The district will employ Positive Behavior Technicians (PBTs), for example, and part of their job duties include implementing student behavior support plans with fidelity inside the students' environments (e.g., classroom, recess, lunch, PE). The students will be taught in-context how to meet behavioral expectations. This meets a recommendation from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWCH) IES Practice Guide to provide explicit instruction for student behavior, just as teachers provide explicit academic instruction ("Reducing Problem Behaviors,” p. 8). This method is supported by "Strong" level of evidence.
Positive Behavior Interventionists (PBIs) work closely with the PBTs. They help set up the behavior support plan by collecting and analyzing data, including frequency, duration, Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC), and interval data to develop and adjust student behavior support plans. These tasks fit the first recommendation in the WWCH IES Practice Guide "Using Student Achievement Data" (2009). The first recommendation in the guide says that teachers should use "data from multiple sources to set goals, make curricular and instructional choices, and allocate instructional time." The data from PBIs helps teachers to fulfill this objective (Tier 4). In addition, PBIs are part of a school-wide approach to increasing positive social interactions among students and staff, which meets Tier 2 level of evidence (WWCH, "Reducing," p. 7).

The Attendance Specialists are also part of school-wide approaches to monitoring student behavior and intervening when necessary and thus meet Tier 2 as well. Attendance Specialists also try to find the root cause of why a student may be missing many classes, a recommendation that meets Tier 2 of evidence (WWCH, "Reducing," p.6), and they also intervene early when students start to show attendance difficulties (Tier 4; WWCH "Preventing Dropout").

In addition to the PBIs and Attendance Specialists providing school-wide approaches to supporting students, the Indian Education Cultural Specialists provides this support as well. The review of research has shown a "critical need for increased cultural competence in developing positive relationships in school and community contexts" (Tier 2; WWCH, "Reducing," p. 9). The Cultural Specialists will help the school system to achieve this goal with Native American students by building relationships with students and ensuring the curriculum accurately reflects the region's indigenous history.

The Academic Interventionists have "strong" evidence of effectiveness; job duties supported by strong evidence include providing training and coaching for teachers administering interventions. Another job duty under this position involves providing parent outreach to assist parents with strategies they can use to support their child, a strategy that has moderate evidence of effectiveness (Tier 2). Additional paraeducators supported through ESSER III dollars are also supported by Tier 1 and Tier 2 level of evidence for similar reasons as the Academic Interventionists; they work side by side with teachers and students in order to provide a collaborative approach to address behaviors and provide academic support (Tier 2), and they individually adapt instruction to "promote high rates of student-engagement and on-task behavior" (Tier 1) (WWCH, "Reducing," p. 22).

The math and literacy tutors supported through ESSER III funds also provide more targeted, individualized instruction for students (thus meeting Tier 2) (WWCH, "Reducing"). The literacy tutors also meet Tier 1 because they will "select an intervention that provides an explicit instructional focus to meet each student's identified learning needs," whether that is vocabulary, comprehension, etc. (WWCH, “Improving Adolescent Literacy,” p. 10).

Sources:


Needs of Students Disproportionately Impacted

Describe how the district will respond to the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Address each stakeholder group.

Students in the district who come from low income families will benefit from the use of ESSER III funds in multiple ways. First, the district will use ESSER III funds to hire additional Student Wellness and Family Facilitators (SWFFs). The role of the SWFFs is to offer support to families and their child(ren) to reach a level of functioning at school and home. They meet with students and families to better understand their unique situations, connect them to resources in the community, and provide follow up. For low-income families, SWFFs connect them to basic resources that affect functioning such as food pantries, health insurance, and rent support. Another use of ESSER III funds that specifically helps low-income families is Targeted Case Management, which provides support for students whose needs and barriers extend far beyond the school calendar and work day. Homeless students, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students also benefit from SWFFs and Targeted Case Management.

Students of color are also supported in multiple ways through the use of ESSER III funds. The district's Indian Education program will get a boost by hiring a Cultural Specialist. Among other duties, this person will help the district to update curriculum in order to comply with Senate Bill #2304, which passed this spring and requires, as of August 1 of this year, all of North Dakota's elementary and secondary public and nonpublic schools in the state to include curriculum on Native American history. The Cultural Specialist will help Native American students, whose families were often disproportionately affected by the pandemic, to see themselves represented in our state's history lessons in an accurate way. Another way that ESSER III funds will help students of color is through the hiring of a staff to help the district implement and consistently use Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices is a technique designed to repair relationships and empower students to independently solve conflicts. The district views this technique as a way to improve social-emotional competencies of students and also as a method to improve school culture and climate. Students may skip school, for example, because they feel they do not belong, which Restorative Practices can help remedy. In addition to helping students of color, Restorative Practices helps homeless students, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students by building relationships and connections that may be more difficult for students in less permanent homes to build on their own.

Another benefit that ESSER III will provide is increased support for English Learners. In the past, bilingual paraeducators have unofficially also acted as cultural and linguistic liaisons for families. During the school year 2020-2021, the bilingual paraeducators noted a dramatic increase in the number of parents who were contacting them for support in understanding the logistics of school (the changing schedule due to COVID, where students need to go, etc.). The paraeducators also expressed concern that students were falling behind and not meeting learning targets. To remedy this, bilingual paraeducators began hosting weekly "office hours" via Zoom for parents and students to virtually "drop in" and ask any questions they may have. Parents who were not able to access Zoom were able to connect with the paraeducators via phone. Now, the district will formalize the translation and cultural support by hiring cultural/linguistic liaisons. The staff will receive more formalized training to prepare them to serve in this capacity, and the paraeducators will be able to return to their regular job duties now that the district has the needed linguistic and cultural support for English Learners.

Children with disabilities also receive support through the district's planned use of ESSER III funds to hire a Positive Behavior Interventionist (PBI) at the middle school level. PBIs provide behavior supports for students with disabilities while helping those students to stay connected and included in the general education classroom. While the district employs 9 PBIs, they are all at the elementary level. ESSER III funds will be used to extend that support to the middle school level.
## Estimated Use of Funds Plan

### Allowable Use of Funds

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## Compliance with General Education Provisions Act Section 427

### Compliance with General Education Provisions Act Section 427 (GEPA)

**What barriers exist in your community that may prevent students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries from access or participation in the funded projects or activities listed in the application?**

The program types under FPS’s use of ESSER III and their associated barriers to access and participation are:

1. **Educational technology**: Fargo Public Schools will use ESSER III funds to provide additional help desk support for elementary students and their families. Because elementary students did not have electronic devices prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they may feel intimidated using devices. Their parents may not have much time to seek technical support.

2. **Mental health supports**: Seeking support for mental health services is still stigmatized in many cultures. Students and staff may feel ashamed or be reluctant to admit when they need help. Discussing emotions is also gendered, so male students and teachers in particular may be reluctant to seek support.

3. **Supplemental learning**: Fargo Public Schools will use ESSER III to pay for students to attend the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE). A barrier to access is that students can feel isolated and cut off from their peers when taking online courses. This effect is compounded when students belong to groups that are already marginalized.

4. **Added needs of at-risk populations**: Students may fear that they are being targeted or that the district is seeking punishment for a noted problem (e.g., attendance). Because certain challenges tend to co-
occur with demographic categories, students may perceive certain services or staff members as targeting them because of their race, national origin, etc.

(5) Transportation: To access additional academic help, students may face a transportation barrier because they need to be at the school building outside the traditional hours for class. Early morning buses funded through ESSER III will help overcome this barrier. Students from lower-class families may still face a barrier if they have jobs outside of school.

(6) ESSA: Under the ESSA category, Fargo Public Schools is hiring multiple Academic Interventionists. Academic Interventionists work extensively with students to help them improve specific skills and strategies. Students may attempt to refuse services due to cultural reasons. Again, this category is similar to the category of responding to the needs of at-risk students because academic challenges co-occur with demographic categories, so students may feel they are being profiled.

(7) IDEA (Special Education): Whenever providing services to students with disabilities, a challenge is providing the needed support while maintaining the least restrictive environment for students. Ideally, added support for students with disabilities should not reduce the amount of time the students spend with their peers in the general education classroom environment.

(8) Perkins: Career and Technical Resource Education (CTRE) is a supplement support service for students in CTE. It is designed to help marginalized groups (students of single parents, from economically disadvantaged households, etc.). A barrier to access is that students may feel self-conscious about their identity and not want to disclose how/why they qualify.

(9) Indian, Native Hawaiian, & Alaskan Native Act: There are many Native American tribes in our region, not just one. A challenge that the Cultural Specialist in the Indian Education department will face is that some tribes in the area may feel that they are not represented equally with other tribes. The Mentor hired under Indian Education will also face a challenge in that students may feel they have been profiled or stereotyped in a certain way just by offering the services specific for them.

(10) Implement public health protocols: ESSER III will be used to hire health aids to help the elementary school nurses. While this will provide greater access for students, students may still hesitate to seek services if they do not qualify for Medicaid or if their parent has worries about something being "wrong" with their child and feeling self-conscious that it is a reflection of their parenting.

(11) High quality instructional materials and curricula: ESSER III funds will support the district's movement to Canvas, a learning management system. Teachers who are uncomfortable with new technology may face an access barrier.

(12) Other Activities to maintain operation & continuity of services: Under this category, Fargo Public Schools plans to hire about 30 long-term substitutes. If a community member from a protected class applies for employment and does not receive the job, he or she may wonder if this was due to their identity. In addition, a challenge with substitute teachers is that it can be more difficult for students to form connections with them.

(13) Principal Resources to Address School Needs: Because funds from this category are tied to specific people in the buildings, a barrier is that staff in the building may perceive favoritism or identity as influencing funding decisions.

Note: unlisted program types are not part of the district's ESSER III budget.

What steps are being taken to address or overcome these barriers?
The steps that FPS is taking to ensure groups covered under GEPA have access to services are:

(1) Educational technology: The additional help desk support at the elementary level will reduce the burden on our help desk staff, ensuring that students, teachers, and parents are assisted faster. A designated person to help at the elementary level will also ensure that the person has the right knowledge base to answer the elementary-specific questions (elementary students are provided ipads while secondary students have different devices).

(2) Mental health supports: The district will offer tele-mental health services, which improves access because students/staff can receive care from environments where they are already comfortable - thus minimizing disruptions to their day. The services will also be marketed in such a way to normalize the care and communicate that asking for help is normal and expected.

(3) Supplemental learning: Students who receive classes through the North Dakota Center for Distance Education may feel isolated from their peers and the school community. To mitigate these challenges, the district has an Attendance Specialist who will help make sure ALL Fargo Public Schools students stay
engaged in their coursework. The district also employs other employees who help build relationships with students, like SWFFs and Targeted Case Managers.

(4) Added needs of at-risk populations: Staff are trained to focus on building relationships with students and being conscious of their personal circumstances. For example, Attendance Specialists will not contact absent students to tell them they will be suspended if they do not attend school but, rather, to understand their circumstances to see how the school can help them. Students must be given a voice and space to express themselves so that they do not feel unfairly targeted or that punishment is being disguised as a service.

(5) Transportation: To help students access additional help for their classes, they will be provided with early-morning buses to take them to school before their academic classes start for the day. For students who cannot attend early morning sessions due to their schedules, support can be provided either after school or via electronic options.

(6) ESSA: Academic Interventionists hired under ESSER III must make it clear and transparent when and why a student is in need of services. This must be communicated to the student using the student-centered model of learning.

(7) IDEA (Special Education): Services will be provided for students with disabilities in such a way that they coexist with general education. To do this, ESSER III SPED services will be provided through the push-in model whenever possible. Overlap in need for services between students in SPED and students in the general education classroom (like reading support) may mean that small groups can include both student groups.

(8) Perkins: To ensure students are not self-conscious about receiving CTRE support, staff must always keep student-centered learning at the forefront when providing services to students.

(9) Indian, Native Hawaiian, & Alaskan Native Act: The Cultural Specialist will need to be mindful of the many different tribes represented at Fargo Public Schools and will need to be sure that histories are represented as accurately as possible. This position will consult with the Parent Committee that is required as part of the district's receipt of Title VI federal funds. The position will also work closely with Melody Staeber, the district's long-term Indian Education Coordinator who has built many relationships with tribal members in the community. The Indian Education mentor will need to be mindful in a way similar to the positions described to serve at-risk kids: make sure student voices and learning are centered and respected.

(10) Implement public health protocols: Health aids will work to build relationships and trust with students. The district is also seeking outside funding to support economically disadvantaged students whose families may avoid medical care due to cost.

(11) High quality instructional materials and curricula: The district has a designated internal Canvas contact who can answer questions and help users navigate the platform.

(12) Other Activities to maintain operation & continuity of services: The District prohibits discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, or other status protected by law. This applies to hiring decisions. For the students who have difficulty forming relationships with substitute teachers, some of the other positions supported through ESSER III dollars (SWFFs, PBTS) can help mitigate this challenge.

(13) Principal Resources to Address School Needs: Principals will be transparent about how funding decisions are made.

Note: unlisted program types are not part of the district's ESSER III budget.