



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

September 3, 2021

To: School Committee
From: Joe Sawyer
Re: ESSER-3 Federal Grant Funding: Process for Determining Use

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund provides a third round of federal funding for our school district for use to address various needs related to educating students during the COVID-19 pandemic. ESSER-1 funding, which was part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, totaled \$162,060; ESSER-2 funding, which was part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRSSA) Act, provided \$557,280. These funds were allocated for a variety of purposes related to managing through the demands placed upon our schools during the pandemic. ESSER-1 funds were spent entirely on personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 surveillance testing. ESSER-2 funds were used for additional PPE, procuring additional furniture, furniture storage, tents, technology hardware, and providing required special education compensatory services for students.

This third round of funds, known as ESSER-3, is a larger apportionment of funding at \$1,229,980, and it comes with many more requirements for approved use, as illustrated by [this 50-page FAQ](#) from the U.S. Department of Education. A more digestible explanation of preparing to apply for these funds from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, who is responsible for distributing these federal funds to local districts, is found [here](#). The funding may be used this year once approved and can be extended through September 30, 2024 as a final deadline for spending.

You will see that outreach to stakeholders is an important part of the process. The district received feedback from families and staff in August through two separate ThoughtExchange online information exchanges, and in the coming week we will be soliciting additional, specific information from the required stakeholder groups, including students, families, staff, collective bargaining unions, and community groups as noted in the requirements. This feedback will inform the recommendations we will bring forward to the School Committee for approval at your September 22 meeting, so that the district can prepare and submit its application for fund use by the deadline of October 4.

The staff and family feedback solicited in August indicated that student mental health and well-being is seen as a significant priority and need. Other areas that the district will be asking for specific feedback for the potential investment of these funds is the provision of reading and mathematics support for students to address the educational impact of the

pandemic, along with the continuation of targeted learning supports for students in the summer of 2022. It is important to note that 20% of the funds must be used “to address lost instructional time 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:

- low-income children or students,
- children with disabilities,
- English learners,
- racial and ethnic minorities,
- students experiencing homelessness, and
- children and youth in foster care”

When we present this information to you at your meeting on September 8, School Committee members are invited to ask questions and share your perspectives regarding these potential uses of the ESSER-3 funds along with any other district needs that you believe these funds could address.