

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education



Option Twelve: Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

Closing achievement gaps has been a high-priority task in state education systems for years, a gap which has received much attention yet has barely changed, and with the mass disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic enduring for nearly a year, those achievement gaps will widen. To mitigate learning loss incurred during the pandemic and ensure that the country does not lose a generation of students, policymakers must be deliberate in how they use federal relief for efforts to mitigate learning loss and be especially attentive to the needs of students who are suffering disproportionate amounts of learning loss. Some options on how to best approach this issue using ESSER funds including the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students’ academic progress and assist educators in meeting students’ academic needs, including through differentiating instruction.

- Partner with preschool programs to ensure data sharing for [kindergarten transition](#).
- Provide support for kindergarten teachers in interpreting pre-K assessment data.
- Align assessment between preschool and kindergarten focusing on multiple domains of development.
- Provide professional development for early learning partners and kindergarten teachers on the high-quality formative assessment process as well as transition strategies.
- Provide professional development for kindergarten teachers on state early learning and development standards for preschoolers.

Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

- Implement social-emotional curriculum such as Second Step, Pyramid Model, etc.
- Partner with early learning programs, such as Head Start, to provide evidence-based [parenting education](#) supports and professional learning sessions to families, such as [Parents as Teachers](#), [Circle of Security](#), [Abreindo Puertos](#), [Incredible Years](#), etc.
- Implement developmentally appropriate curriculum including at home activities in which technology is not required.
- Provide coaches to help promote best practices for working with young children through distance learning, hybrid models, and in person to address the traumas and anxiety of the COVID-19 period.

Providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment.

- Offer family engagement supports such as [Ready Rosie](#).
- Training and resources (in multiple languages) for families and caregivers to understand how to use online resources.
- Support families in staying up to date on their child’s immunizations and well child visits.

Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.

- Align attendance policies across early learning programs and provide [supports](#) to districts for tracking [attendance](#).

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- In Connecticut, an outline for [sensible assessment practices](#) moving forward was released.
- Invest in a learning management system for remote learning and assignments to provide organization and communication. Hawaii's Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design (OCID) provided schools with [Blackboard Learn](#) as a learning management system, with additional content for distance/blended learning.

Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

- Provide research-based professional development to allow teachers, school counselors, and support staff to shift their [lessons to distance learning](#) and ensure high-quality learning.
- Invest in [tutoring programs](#), reduce [student-to-teacher ratios](#) for individualized student attention and class sizes, and hire additional support staff to facilitate small group work.
- Extend [instructional school year](#) to increase the amount of instructional time students receive.
- Provide information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment.
- Focus on using low-cost solutions to prevent [achievement gaps](#) from widening, such as working with districts to [mail books](#) to students on a bi-weekly basis. These books would have pre- and post-comprehension questions and would be completed and mailed back – [research](#) finds that this approach has positive effects on reading comprehension, effects of which are most pronounced in high-poverty districts. This intervention could be coupled with text-messaging reminders to encourage students and families to complete those assignments.

Tracking [student attendance](#) and improving student engagement in distance education.

- Allocate funds for [high-intensity tutoring programs](#). These programs would focus on literacy and numeracy skills and could be structured in the following way:
 - High school students tutor elementary school students as an elective course.
 - College students tutor middle school students as a federal/state work-study job; and
 - Recent college graduates tutor high school students as full time tutors.
 - [Paraprofessionals, substitutes, retired teachers, and education students as tutors](#)

States are addressing learning loss through legislation:

- On the legislative front, states are developing bills targeted at mitigating learning loss. In January 2021, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee [announced](#) special session legislation specifically targeted at learning loss. Those bills are the following:
 - [SB 7001](#): Accountability to Inform: Extends hold harmless provisions from the 2019-20 school year to the 2020-21 school year so that students, teachers, schools, and districts do not face any negative consequences associated with student assessments; and provides parents and educators with assessment data including TCAP testing to provide an accurate picture of where Tennessee students are and what supports are needed to offset any learning losses.
 - [SB 7002](#): Intervening to Stop Learning Loss: Requires interventions for struggling students including after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps and summer learning camps, beginning in summer 2021; prioritizes students who score below proficient in both reading (ELA) and math subjects; creates the Tennessee Accelerated Literacy and Learning Corps to provide ongoing tutoring for students throughout the entire school year; and strengthens laws around a third grade reading gate so we no longer advance students who are not prepared.
- In Washington, [Senate Bill 5147](#), which was introduced by Senator Brad Hawkins, is accumulating support from the Washington Education Association and the Washington State Department of Education. The bill calls for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to select a limited number of school districts for a program to implement a year-round school calendar.

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Use a portion of the ESSER funding to develop partnerships with IHEs that allow higher education resources to be used for efforts around mitigating learning loss. [New York](#) explored expanded learning options like enrichment programs.

Structure the effort in any number of ways - for example, a grant program that provides funding to LEAs and IHEs that submitted descriptions of creative ways of developing a partnership.

- [Kentucky](#) used funding for a program to improve student behavior and increase student academic performance.
- [New Mexico](#) used funding for a program to build school-community relationships.
- [South Dakota used grant](#) funding for partnerships supporting diversity, mental health, college or career guidance, and STEM programs.

Recruit IHEs that have worked to develop relationships with local community providers.

- An [Oregon study](#) found reciprocity and communication as partnership keys.