

PANDEMIC FUNDING FOR K-12

COVID-19 PANDEMIC THREE FEDERAL RELIEF BILLS

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government passed three relief bills (see Table 1). Each contains specific funding for K-12 public education to go through state departments of education. Money in these federal relief bills is also designated for allocation by state legislatures and state governors that can also be used for K-12 public schools.

ESSER Funds

Funding in each of the three bills allocated to state departments of education are designated as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. For each (ESSER I, ESSER II and ARP ESSER), a state department of education has to distribute at least 90% of its funding to school districts in their state. The Title I funding formula is

Federal ESSER Funding

The federal government passed three COVID-relief bills. Each includes Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding for K-12 public schools. School districts receive the funds via the SC Dept. of Education. Each set of ESSER funding has its own rules and deadlines for the use of the funds by the state and school districts.

Table 1: Federal Pandemic Relief Legislation

Name of Bill	Month Enacted	K-12-Specific Funding Portion
CARES Act - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act	March 2020	ESSER I
CRRSA - Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act	December 2020	ESSER II
ARP - American Rescue Plan	March 2021	ARP ESSER

the basis for allocating funds to districts. (See Table 2.)

Each of the ESSER funds has its own deadline for using the funds (see Table 3) and its own rules on the specific activities for which the funds can be used. In total, these funds can be used over five school years and summers with school districts and states required to obligate their last round of funding by September 2024. Allowable uses for each round of funding vary. See the rules for [ESSER I](#), [ESSER II](#) and [ARP ESSER](#).

The third round of ESSER funds (those allocated under the American Rescue Plan) is noteworthy for the size of funding. For both South Carolina and Greenville County Schools, ARP ESSER funding is about 80% more than that received in the first two ESSER rounds combined (see Table 2).

It is also noteworthy because it splits disbursement of these ESSER funds into two parts. Two-thirds of the funds were immediately released to states and on to school districts. (The South Carolina Dept. of Education disbursed these funds to school districts in May 2021.) The U.S. Dept. of Education will release a state’s remaining one-third upon approval of a plan for its use as submitted by the state department of education.

As part of the development of the state plan, each school district is required to submit their own plan on how they intend to use the remaining one-third of their funds.

District plans must be made “after seeking input from a wide range of groups, including students, parents, educators, and civil rights organizations. They must also focus on addressing inequities that may have been exacerbated by the pandemic.” All

district plans must be publicized and regularly updated as a condition of receiving this aid.

A final difference is that, from all ARP ESSER funds received by a school district, twenty percent must be directed to addressing learning loss.

Funds to Legislatures & Governors

Under these relief bills, state legislatures and governors were each provided with federal funds they could allocate to K-12 public education.

Using its CARES Act funds, the South Carolina legislature allocated a portion of its “Coronavirus Relief Funds” (CRF) for K-12 public schools. Initially the funds were used for Academic Recovery Camps and to add five extra days of instruction to the start of the school year. Left-over funds were then allocated by the legislature to the SC Dept. of Education for [other specified uses](#). The governor in South Carolina allocated some of his CARES Act funding for K-12 charter schools.

Previous to that, the governor sparked controversy by initially allocating two-thirds of his funds for scholarships for students to attend private (secular and religious) schools. Eligibility for the scholarships was to be limited to students in families at or below 300% of the poverty line or \$78,600 for a family of four.

However, the program was struck down before it could be implemented. The [South Carolina Supreme Court unanimously ruled](#) that it violated a provision in the state constitution prohibiting the use of state funds for “the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution” (Article XI,

Section 4). It was [unanimously struck down again on appeal](#).

To date no other federal COVID-relief funds provided to the state legislature and governor in South Carolina have been made available for all school districts in the state.

Funding for Greenville Schools

Pandemic relief funding for Greenville County Schools (GCS) and the to-date use or commitment of those funds is provided in Table 3. As noted in the table, there are different deadlines for each type of relief fund.

The district had use of the first set of these additional federal funds for the last portion of the 2019-20 school year. In total, pandemic relief funds are available for four additional school years and summers (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24). The last of this money is required to be obligated by the end of September 2024.

Table 2: Federal Pandemic Relief Funds for South Carolina School Districts

I. ESSER¹ FUNDING

	Total to SC Dept. of Education	Subgrants to Districts ²	GCS ³ amount	GCS % of Subgrants
CARES ⁴ Act (ESSER I)	216,311,518	194,680,042	19,306,291	9.9%
CRRSA ⁵ (ESSER II)	940,420,782	846,378,704	72,492,356	8.6%
ARP⁶ ESSER				
Two-Thirds ⁷	1,408,034,325	1,267,230,895	108,538,356	
One-third	<u>704,017,162</u>	<u>633,615,443</u>	<u>54,269,177</u>	
Total	2,112,051,487	1,900,846,338	162,807,533	8.6%
Total - All Three ESSER	3,268,783,787	2,941,905,084	254,606,180	8.7%
ARP ESSER as % of I & II Total	183%	183%	177%	

II. OTHER RELIEF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS⁸

	Total to SC Dept. of Education	Subgrants to Districts	GCS amount	GCS % of Subgrants
State CRF ⁹ from CARES Act	84,264,890	84,264,890	7,813,193	9.3%

III. TOTAL RELIEF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS¹⁰

	Total to SC Dept. of Education	Subgrants to Districts	GCS amount	GCS % of Subgrants
TOTAL RELIEF FUNDS	3,353,048,677	3,026,169,974	262,419,373	8.7%

¹ESSER - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (K-12-specific portion of federal relief bills)

²Federal relief laws require that at least 90% of received ESSER funds be allocated to school districts.

³Greenville County Schools

⁴CARES Act - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (Enacted March 2020).

⁵CRRSA - Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (Enacted December 2020).

⁶ARP - American Rescue Plan (Enacted March 2021).

⁷Two-thirds is being released immediately (by May 24, 2021); the remaining one-third will be released based on approval of district and state ARP plans. From the total of all ARP funds received by a district, at least 20% must be allocated to address learning loss.

⁸Does not include CARES Act funds allocated by the State Legislature for 2020 summer Academic Recovery Camps and five additional August school days. Does not include nearly \$50 million in PPE distributed to school districts by the SC Dept. of Education. And does not include relief funding allocated by the Governor solely for charter schools.

⁹CRF - South Carolina Coronavirus Relief Fund

¹⁰See footnote 8.

Table 3: Federal Pandemic Relief Funds for Greenville County Schools

I. AMOUNTS RECEIVED, USED & REMAINING¹

	Received Amount	Spent or Committed as of May 2021	Amount Remaining	Deadline for Use
CARES Act²				
State CRF ³	7,813,193	7,813,193	0	Sept. 2021
ESSER ⁴ I	19,306,291	19,306,291	0	Sept. 2022
CRRSA⁵				
ESSER II	72,492,356	35,683,000	36,809,356	Sept. 2023
ARP⁶				
ARP ESSER Part One ⁷	108,538,356	32,600,000	75,938,356	Sept. 2024
ARP ESSER Part Two	54,269,177	0	54,269,177	Sept. 2024
Totals⁸ - All Relief Funds	262,419,373	95,402,484	167,016,889	

II. USE OF AMOUNTS RECEIVED

	Funds Spent/Committed ⁹ by School Year			Pct. of Total Over 3 Years
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
ANNUAL EXPENDITURES				
Summer School		7,510,000	7,510,000	26%
Elementary Interventionists		1,828,000	10,590,000	21%
Tutoring - Before & After School (K-12)		2,700,000	8,000,000	18%
Maintain Operations & Continue Services	7,852,964			14%
Tutoring - During School & Aides (High Schools)		1,400,000	3,103,000	8%
PPE/Sanitation/Social Distancing		2,715,200		5%
Virtual & e-Learning		2,346,920		4%
Remediation Supplies/Software Licenses (K-8)			1,600,000	3%
Student Assessments		766,400		1%
Annual Expenditure Totals	7,852,964	19,266,520	30,803,000	100%
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES				
	Occurring in 2021-22 & remaining 2 years			
Academics & Classrooms ¹⁰			24,550,000	66%
District and School Operations ¹¹			12,930,000	34%
Capital Expenditure Total			37,480,000	100%

¹Does not include CARES Act funds allocated by the State Legislature for 2020 summer Academic Recovery Camps and five additional August school days. Also does not include nearly \$50 million in PPE distributed to school districts by the SC Dept. of Education.

²CARES Act - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (Enacted March 2020).

³CRF - South Carolina Coronavirus Relief Fund

⁴ESSER - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (K-12 portion of federal relief bills)

⁵CRRSA - Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (Enacted December 2020).

⁶ARP - American Rescue Plan (Enacted March 2021).

⁷Part One (2/3 of the total) was released immediately (May 2021); Part Two (the other 1/3) will be released based on approval of district and state plans. From the total of all ARP funds received by a district, at least 20% must be allocated to address learning loss.

⁸For comparison, the board-approved 2021-22 General Fund Budget for Greenville County Schools is \$714,772,000.

⁹As of May 2021

¹⁰Classroom libraries; Career and Technical Education improvements, Virtual school and classroom software; Calculators; and Graduation ceremony as allocated in May 2021.

¹¹Telephone system; Security camera servers; Information security system (primary and secondary firewalls); Backup systems; Application development hardware and software; Network servers; Data center equipment; School check-in system; School employee badge system; Network load balancers; Web application filter; and Firewall monitoring and logging server as allocated in May 2021.

Sources

Greenville County Schools (<https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/>)

South Carolina Dept. of Education (<https://ed.sc.gov/>)

The Post and Courier (<https://www.postandcourier.com/>)

U.S. Dept. of Education (<https://www.ed.gov/>)