Spending of Texas' Federal Stimulus Dollars for Education

As public education budget hearings draw near, we must recognize the important work of the upcoming session to ensure the current health crisis doesn't become a generational education crisis. This includes renewing our commitment to fully fund House Bill 3 and ensuring federal stimulus dollars earmarked for public education remain in our public schools.

Digging out of this crisis will take more than just sustaining current funding levels for public education. Using stimulus funds for interventions, improved broadband access, and extended instructional time will be necessary to prevent lasting harm to our students and to position our students and state for a strong recovery. *Because a strong Texas recovery requires a strong recovery for our public schools.*

What federal stimulus has been provided?

The federal government is providing billions in COVID-19 relief funding to public schools across the country. Texas initially received $1.3 billion in federal stimulus funding intended for our schools in the spring of 2020. However, schools did not see any additional money because Texas instead diverted these funds to fill other state budget holes.

In December of 2020, the federal government awarded another $5.5 billion meant for K-12 education to Texas. This funding, plus any additional money provided by a possible third round of stimulus, now hangs in the balance for our schools.

By the end of these three rounds of federal stimulus for schools, Texas may be awarded tens of billions of dollars meant to help address COVID-19-related issues for schools, including student learning loss, student mental health services, broadband and technology needs, purchasing protective equipment, and upgrading facilities.

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How have COVID costs gone up?

School leaders are feeling their budgets tighten with rising costs related to COVID-19. Here are some snapshots of the unanticipated expenses that districts are facing:

- In Pasadena ISD, a principal has had to use 40 percent of her campus' discretionary operating budget for COVID cleaning supplies and safety measures. These supplies have included masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, plexiglass dividers, additional cafeteria tables to enable social distancing, and more.
- In Clear Creek ISD, a principal has had days where 35 to 45 teachers have been out, resulting in the need for more substitute teachers. In all, CCISD has spent over $500,000 on COVID-related substitute teachers this year.
- In Mineral Wells ISD, a principal has spent more than $300,000 on hotspots, Chromebooks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), signage, substitute teachers, and extra staff hours and supplies for serving meals and janitorial services.
- In Los Fresnos CISD, the district has spent 66 percent of its extra duty budget so far this year to support bus delivery of meals to remote learners.
- In Ysleta ISD, a principal has spent over $54,000 on devices and protective covers for remote learning and $1,000 on defogging machines to aid campus sanitation.
- In Galveston ISD, officials have spent $1.9 million on devices and hotspots, $100,000 on air purifying systems, $30,000 on plexiglass, $200,000 on social distancing signs and water and sanitation stations, $125,000 on a COVID coordinator position, and $300,000 on nurse aides.
- In Frenship ISD, district officials have invested $3 million in student devices and hotspots for students who don't have reliable internet.

What are some ways school districts could use this money?

As we look to the future, schools will need more funding to respond to the recovery needs — academic, mental, and emotional — of their students and to pursue school reinvention opportunities in districts across Texas. Here are some examples:

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- Pre-K and kindergarten interventions
- Tutoring
- Additional school days/summer school
- High school credit recovery
- Increased efforts to locate students and provide outreach
- Before-school and after-school care
- Substitute teachers
- Counseling services
- Technology upgrades
- Additional nurses
- Additional devices
- Better systems for contract tracing
- PPE

How are other states using stimulus funding?

The Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act provided public education funding to states through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Both grants, known as ESSER I and ESSER II, allocated $13.2 billion and $54.3 billion to states, respectively. Of the amounts provided to each state, **at least 90 percent of those funds must go to school districts as flexible dollars to meet local needs.** States are urging school districts to spend these funds on internet connectivity, mental health support, professional development, personal protective equipment, and more. When used as supplemental funds, ESSER dollars can be crucial for helping school districts overcome the instructional challenges of this pandemic. See how much other states have gotten from the ESSER Fund:

California

- $1,647,306,127 ($267 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $6,709,633,866 ($1,088.69 per student) in ESSER II funds

Connecticut

- $111,068,059 ($210 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $492,426,458 ($932 per student) in ESSER II funds

Florida

- $770,247,851 ($270 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $3,133,878,723 ($1,122 per student) in ESSER II funds

Indiana

- $214,472,770 ($203 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $888,883,537 ($843 per student) in ESSER II funds

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Louisiana

- $286,980,175 ($400 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $1,160,119,378 ($1,619 per student) in ESSER II funds

Mississippi

- $169,883,002 ($364 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $724,532,847 ($1,555 per student) in ESSER II funds

New Mexico

- $108,574,786 ($326 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $435,938,638 ($1,309 per student) in ESSER II funds

Oklahoma

- $160,950,476 ($228 per student) in ESSER I
- $665,038,753 ($945 per student) in ESSER II funds

Utah

- $67,821,787 ($102 per student) in ESSER I funds
- $274,071,684 ($415 per student) in ESSER II funds

How has Texas used additional CARES Act funding for public education?

Texas spent some CARES Act money on specific PPE and technology reimbursement programs for public schools. This money, however, was not flexible, and some of the programs are not used by a large number of school districts. This is what Texas spent that money on:

- **$420 million:** Operation Connectivity Prior Purchase Reimbursement Program
- **$175 million:** Operation Connectivity Bulk Order Purchase Program
- **$163.2 million:** Texas Home Learning
- **$69 million** in resources: Personal Protective Equipment and Rapid Tests
- **$29.8 million:** Supplemental Special Education Services

TEA states the largest portion of the **$1.3 billion CARES Act's ESSER I Fund was a critical resource to support the hold harmless enrollment decline process. Yet, in a July letter to state leadership, Comptroller Glenn Hegar clearly states the public education CARES Act funding helped reduce the cost of the Foundation School Program, helping to reduce the 2020-21 state budget shortfall.*

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