

Charter School of Inquiry Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)

Introduction

ESSER is an acronym for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. It consists of Federal funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on schools and students.

Allowable Uses of ESSER Funds

- Professional development for staff, comprehensive academic improvement strategies, mental health and behavioral support, increasing instructional staff, teacher mentors and coaches.
- Materials, technology, and training: instructional materials to help address areas of need due to COVID learning loss.
- Extended instructional time: after-school programs, summer programs.
- Mental health and behavioral supports: social workers, counselors, at-risk coordinators, wrap-around community partnerships.
- Improved ventilation, increased cleaning and disinfecting, HVAC upgrades, specialized instructional and office spaces.
- Computers and other technology, learning management systems, software and other learning programs, digital tools, infrastructure improves in response to the pandemic.

Determining the use of ESSER Funds at CSI

CSI established a task force to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and to monitor the effectiveness of our response.

The task force was made up of five subcommittees. Each subcommittee included parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and community members.

The five subcommittees were: **Operations**, that included health and safety procedures, reporting and legal compliance, technology, nutrition and food service, and technology; **Academics**, that included curriculum, instruction, assessment, grading, and professional development; **Culture**, that included social-emotional learning, family and student engagement, family and student supports, community partnership, and counseling and referral services; **Schoolwide Routines and Procedures**, that included arrival and dismissal, transportation, lunch procedures, classroom procedures, and transitions; **Special Services**, that included the delivery of special education services, academic interventions, support to English language learners, speech therapy and physical therapy.

Each subcommittee reported to the full task force that was accountable to the Head of School, who in turn reported to the Board of Trustees.

Part of the work of the task force was to administer three surveys to parents to assess the following: the effectiveness of academic instruction during COVID-19; parent preferences and recommendations

moving forward; and families' access to technology, the Internet, educational software, and technology support; and health and safety protocols in the school. Nearly 90% of parents responded to the surveys, and the results were used to inform the development of the Reopening Plan and the use of ARP-ESSER Funds to best meet the needs of all students, teachers, and families.

In August of 2021, the task force conducted a public meeting for parents, staff, and community members (in-person and via Zoom) to discuss the proposed use of ESSER Funds.

Using ESSER Funds to Help Reduce the Spread of COVID at School

With the input from teachers, parents, and community members, guidance from local and state health departments, and in compliance with the recommendations of the CDC, CSI has designated ESSER funds to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the following ways:

- Provided training for all staff members on how to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Provided training for all students on steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Hired substitute teachers to allow staff members to receive the COVID-19 vaccine during school hours
- Shared information with families on steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (mask-wearing, handwashing, symptoms of COVID-19, importance of keeping sick children home, etc.)
- Providing information to families and staff on testing and vaccination sites on social media
- Increasing nursing services in the school
- Hiring additional staff to help conduct health screenings in the morning and to monitor an isolation room
- Providing digital thermometers to all staff members as part of screening protocol
- Hire additional custodians to clean and disinfect throughout the day
- Hiring additional monitors to keep student cohorts separated throughout the day
- Purchasing disinfecting sprays and sanitizing foggers
- Providing PPE to students, staff, and visitors as needed (masks, shields, gowns, gloves)
- Purchasing markers for hallways and classrooms to designate appropriate social distancing
- Replacing all tables in classrooms with desks to ensure proper distancing
- Install hand sanitizing stations throughout the building
- Upgrading all HVAC filters
- Replacing HVAC filters more frequently
- Replaced existing water fountains with bottle filling stations
- Install touchless faucets on all sinks
- Install touchless paper towel dispensers in all restrooms

With input from instructional specialists, families, and teachers, CSI is using ESSER funds in the following ways:

- Transitioning to a co-teaching model with two certified teachers in every classroom.
- Increase paraprofessionals to provide additional academic support and to promote health and safety protocol.
- Offer summer program to extend the school year that includes progress monitoring of participants
- Fund an after-school program to extend the school day with trained teachers and paraprofessionals to support learning

- Adopt research-proven reading and math programs that can be used remotely if necessary
- Adopt research-proven assessment programs that can be used remotely if necessary that will provide teachers with reliable data on student achievement
- Provide access to research-proven tutorial programs to all families during the summer to reinforce learning at home
- Ensure adequate technology for all families to support learning outside of school if the school must pivot back to remote learning.
- Provide all teachers with professional development on the effects of the pandemic and strategies to close the learning gap
- Increase academic progress monitoring throughout the year with research-proven assessment programs
- Ensure adequate technology for all students in school to provide them with online learning and assessment resources

Use of ESSER Funds and Professional Development

The Reopening Task Force conferred with specialists from Erie 1 BOCES and other experts in the field to identify and adopt the best assessment programs that can be used in all modalities, including remote, hybrid, and full-brick and mortar. CSI engaged the services of instructional specialists to provide high-quality professional development to our teachers and paraprofessionals on how to best address gaps in learning and still allow all students to meet grade-level standards.

Use of ESSER Funds to Monitor Academic Progress

At CSI, the Renaissance Star Assessments and Fountas and Pinnell Literacy (F&P) is used in all grades to establish a baseline for ELA, math, and reading. These assessments will be used during the course of the year to monitor student progress and assess the effects the COVID-19 slide and the effectiveness of the interventions adopted by the school to close the COVID-19 learning gaps. Academic progress will be monitored five times during the course of the year for all students, bi-weekly for students at moderate risk, and weekly for students at high risk.

Use of ESSER Funds to Support Social-Emotional Supports

CSI will use the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) to assess students' social-emotional condition and how well they are adapting to returning to the school environment. The T-CRS will be administered three times a year to all students, once every two months to students experiencing moderate adjustment problems, and every month to students needing more support.

Ensuring all Students Benefit From ESSER Funded Programs at CSI

At the Charter School of Inquiry (CSI), 92% of our students live in poverty, 14% are disabled, and 7% speak a language other than English.

All interventions noted above are systematically and universally applied in all classrooms and are research-proven to be successful with high-risk populations of students.

Norm-referenced progress monitoring assessments in ELA, math, reading, and social-emotional adjustment will be administered five times a year for all students, bi-weekly for students at moderate risk, and weekly for students at high risk. Progress monitoring data is routinely disaggregated by subgroups, including economically disadvantaged, English language learners, students with a disability, gender, and race or ethnicity. This data is reviewed and evaluated by the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees, that includes board of trustee members, teachers, community members, school leaders, and a parent representative. This committee tracks student progress for all subgroups of students and implements changes to intervention strategies when necessary.

Modifications to the CSI Reopening Plan

The CSI COVID-19 Task Force is still operational and continues to monitor guidance from the CDC, New York State Department of Health, the Erie County Department of Health, and the New York State Education Department. Furthermore, the task force monitors the success of the reopening plan and recommends adjustments or revisions as necessary. Parents/guardians will be notified of changes via an all-call messenger system and hardcopy letters. The CSI Reopening Plan can be found on the school website. ESSER funds may be reallocated as the needs of the school may change.

CODE/ BUDGET CATEGORY	EXPLANATION OF EXPENDITURES IN THIS CATEGORY (as it relates to the program narrative for this title)
<i>Professional Salaries</i>	Increase instructional staff to accommodate two certified teachers in every classroom, hire summer school and after school program staff, add an additional counselor to our Student Support Team.
<i>Support Staff Salaries</i>	Hire an additional custodian to clean and disinfect throughout the day.
<i>Purchased Services</i>	Increase nursing services during the school day, summer school nursing services, engage the services of an educational specialist to provide PD on mitigating learning loss, additional custodial services to cover for after-school program and summer school program, Chromebook technology upgrade services for 300 student computers, Padlet (online learning resource) subscription for 300 students for two years, Star online assessment licenses for 300 students, digital library service for 300 students for two years.
<i>Supplies and Materials</i>	PPE, including masks, shields, gowns, gloves; digital thermometers for health screenings; sanitizing foggers, disinfectant sprays, hand sanitizer and stations; purchase of 300 Chromebooks for students; Writing Workshop online materials for students.

CODE/ BUDGET CATEGORY	EXPLANATION OF EXPENDITURES IN THIS CATEGORY (as it relates to the program narrative for this title)
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	Inclusive of Social Security and 401K employer contribution for additional certified teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselor, summer school staff, and after-school program staff.
<i>BOCES Services</i>	Provide ongoing support through professional development to teachers on how to best address gaps in learning due to the pandemic, identifying focus skills and standards, scaffolding new material, identifying and responding to trauma and maladaptive behavior, and analyzing data for progress monitoring.
<i>Minor Remodeling</i>	Installing touchless faucets on all existing sinks, replacing water fountains with bottle filling stations, dividing existing public areas into smaller workstations to accommodate increased number of teachers, electrical upgrades to create more workstations, converting public space into pull-out areas to allow for small-group instruction while maintain appropriate distancing and separation of cohorts.