



Dr. Cade Brumley
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

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26 March 2024

RE: ESSER Opportunities

Colleagues,

Nearly three years ago, in response to the global pandemic and with the additional federal dollars available, we launched [Louisiana Comeback](#). I encouraged you to lock arms with our state agency around three priorities: academic recovery and acceleration, student attendance and well-being, and professional growth for educators. Since that moment, we have worked diligently to allocate resources and efforts toward those key areas.

While much work remains, our efforts have been fruitful. For example, Louisiana has advanced in national rankings and, most recently, an independent [Harvard/Stanford study](#) labeled Louisiana's work as a "remarkable achievement" as one of only three states where students have rebounded from the impacts of the pandemic. This is a testament to the work of our state's educators who have remained focused on teaching and learning.

As you may know, the window for investing the additional pandemic relief dollars — known as ESSER — is closing. Hopefully, you have engaged in conversations with your teams to discuss the Academic Return on Investment (AROI) of all efforts under your supervision. These discussions should prioritize spending remaining funds but also frame post-ESSER budgets to ensure we continue to drive student academic outcomes. Without a doubt, sensitive decisions must be made to narrow countless efforts.

For now, be reminded that contracts must be in place and purchase order requisitions must be submitted by September 30, 2024. However, we have provided a grace period until December 16, 2024. This means systems may continue to receive goods and also complete services and construction projects through that December amended liquidation date.

To provide you with an updated understanding of ESSER allocations, remaining balances, and allowable uses of funding, our team will begin sending monthly ESSER balance letters, the first of which will be emailed later this week. The intent of the letter is for school systems to use the information to ensure you have a plan to draw down all remaining funds before the deadline.

While I respect your decision-making process around the remaining dollars and have appreciated your resolve to support students, I would like to encourage spending in a few key areas with remaining funds if your budget allows:

1. **Teachers:** Other than the parent, there are few factors more important than access to an effective classroom teacher. ESSER provides teacher stipends as an allowable expense and



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given the growth our students have experienced, and the work ahead, Louisiana's teachers certainly deserve consideration for pay increases. While our state budget request includes \$2,000 teacher stipends for this upcoming year as well as an additional \$25M funding stream for teachers in key areas, systems also have the opportunity to supplement the pay of teachers with part of their remaining ESSER dollars. These stipends could be used intentionally to secure a high-quality teacher for every student. It also could be utilized to pay teachers for summer collaboration and planning. Please give this action strong consideration as it would be welcomed by educators.

2. **Summer Programs:** Over the last few years, Louisiana has tripled the number of students participating in [summer programs](#). Through creative marketing, systems have combined fun activities such as sports and arts with academic coursework in reading and math. With the remaining dollars available, please consider a robust summer program — with transportation — during this upcoming summer. We believe this will combat summer learning loss and prompt academic improvement.
3. **Tutoring:** Systems across the state have lifted tutoring to new heights over the last few years and this has been helpful in addressing the individualized support students need. Louisiana seeks to become a national leader in offering tutoring during the day through our [Accelerate](#) initiative and after-hours through the [Steve Carter Program](#). Both of these efforts are in their infancy and we have enjoyed working with you to discuss this seismic effort. While we have also requested \$30M for tutoring in the MFP formula. Tutoring funded by ESSER funds for both literacy and math can continue through December 16. Many of these purchases could be made through the remaining ESSER funds.

Please note that our team will support you through the close of ESSER. In fact, school systems and system leaders have done a great job with spend-down on ESSER I and II, utilizing over 99% of available funds. With planning and strong implementation, we can ensure the appropriate and complete utilization of ESSER III as well.

With this unprecedented infusion of additional funding, comes the great responsibility to maximize the impact on student achievement. It is critical school systems invest all of their allocated funds, and in a way that continues our Louisiana Comeback.

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State Superintendent