



ESSER III

FINAL Summary Report

September 2024

***Respectfully submitted by Roxanne Filtz
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Summary of Expenses

The Wisconsin Rapids Public School District has strategically and responsibly utilized the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds, totaling \$7,082,465, to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, ESSER III aimed to enhance the local educational agencies' (LEAs) capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the pandemic. This grant followed the earlier ESSER I and ESSER II Formula Grants.

Wisconsin Rapids Public School District was allocated \$7,082,465 in ESSER III funds of which 20% of the funds must be identified as meeting Evidence Based Instructional Strategies (EBIS). WRPS needed to identify \$1,416,493 for EBIS. In order to demonstrate a commitment to implementing proven strategies for educational improvement, WRPS has allocated 71% (\$4,999,371.49) of its total ESSER III funds to support activities and strategies outlined in the EBIS categories.

Evidence Based Instructional Strategies addressed include *Active Family and Community Engagement, Administering and Using High-Quality Assessments, Assisting Elementary Students Struggling with Mathematics, Collaborative Leadership in Practice, Effective Fractions Instruction for K-8, Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners, Evidence-Based Strategies for Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health, Evidence-Based Summer Programming, Foundational Skills to Support K-3 Reading, Integrated Student Supports, Mathematical Problem Solving in Grades 4 - 8, MLSS in Reading/Math/PBIS Supported by Wisconsin RtI Center, Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Student Learning, Standards-Aligned Instructional Materials and Professional Learning, and Teaching Elementary Students to Write Effectively.*

Some examples of purchases made that support the Evidence Based Instructional Strategies listed above include When Life Is a Puzzle Counseling, Gaggie Therapy, various professional development opportunities for both instructional and non-instructional staff, programs that promote social and emotional wellbeing such as 7 Mindsets, Move This World, Zones of Regulation, PBIS, Responsive Classroom and Conscious Discipline, participation in the NAREN Wisconsin conference (National At-Risk Education Network), LETRS training, Solution Tree PLC training, Link Crew Training, ACT Certified Teacher Training, work with the Ho-Chunk Nation SEED program, PLC integration, maintaining community partnerships with organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin Rapids, and a wide variety of software programs and classroom resource purchases to promote a deeper understanding of math and reading in all grades as well as promote a greater understanding of student data and using that data to improve teacher practice and student learning.

Although purchases were made at all levels, there was a concentrated effort to improve the overall atmosphere of Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School (WRAMS). Staff members from the middle school participated in several local and national conferences designed to strengthen WRAMS as a middle school by learning more about middle-level best practices. Participants who attended the National Middle School Conference in Maryland were expected to gain tools to support the social and emotional needs of their students, enhance their executive functioning skills, and expand their understanding of young adolescent development. In addition, the goal of attending the conferences was to expand the overall understanding of evidence-based middle grade practices like advisory groups, interdisciplinary instruction, teaming, project-based learning, responsive scheduling, and more. ESSER dollars were also utilized at WRAMS to build an alternative education option called the Bridge Program within the school building. This program is designed to provide a means for students to be removed temporarily from regular classroom schedules where they were not seeing success, work on developing necessary social and behavioral skills along with maintaining academic participation, and then transition back into the regular classroom. ESSER III dollars were spent on staffing this program as well as remodeling existing spaces to create a location within WRAMS for this work to occur. In addition to these items, ESSER dollars were also used to purchase software programs, increase math intervention time, provide educational resources, and offer professional development as well as release time for teachers to evaluate data and explore educational options that could be implemented to improve the overall student success of students at WRAMS.

ESSER III funds facilitated community connections, particularly with the Wisconsin Rapids Area Boys and Girls Club, supporting programs like the Morning Jumpstart initiative, providing morning wrap-around care and additional academic support in each of our elementary schools.

The creation of the Student Engagement Facilitator (SEF) positions, supported by ESSER III dollars, proved instrumental in enhancing student engagement, providing behavioral support, and implementing professional learning communities across all district buildings. We moved our existing 5.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) of Instructional Coaches to this newly created position and hired a total of 9.25 FTE across the district. We have been able to support the increase of 4.25 FTE through the use of ESSER III dollars. Unfortunately, these positions have since been reduced to 5.25, we are hoping to find a way to increase their FTE in the coming years as they continue to be a valuable asset to our families, students and staff.

Furthermore, the district wisely allocated funds to hire additional classroom teachers, reducing class sizes over three years. Over the course of three years, 28 classroom teachers have had a portion or all of their salaries covered with ESSER

III dollars. In addition, ESSER III grant funding supported an increase in math and reading intervention personnel, provided a stipend to a number of our mentor teachers, allowed the district to hire an additional elementary ESL teacher and provide classroom substitute teachers so that regular classroom teachers could take part in data evaluation days. In order to provide extra support for our special education students, the district hired 8 additional Special Education Program aides using ESSER III grant dollars.

The expenditure of ESSER III dollars extended to the purchase of manipulatives, supplies, flexible seating options, and supportive technology programs. Each building received a per-pupil stipend to address unique needs arising from the pandemic, resulting in various enhancements such as interactive platforms for physical education and building remodel projects for family resource centers and health rooms. Finally, ESSER III grant dollars helped to fund a portion of the district's Pitsch Early Learning Center which was established to meet the growing needs of our 3 year old early childhood learners as well as some of our district's 4K learners.

All expenses were clearly outlined in the District's ESSER III Formula Grant LEA Plan, presented to the WRPS School Board in January 2022 and reviewed and updated in May 2022. The district's commitment to transparency and accountability ensured that identified projects received the necessary financial support. Amid the challenges of the pandemic, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District remained resilient and continued to provide exceptional educational opportunities to the students of the greater Wisconsin Rapids area.

Accountability

A comprehensive account of all ESSER grant expenditures has been documented in the District's ESSER III Formula Grant LEA Plan and the district has complied with all of the state requirements for review and reporting of the grant's progress. Once the District ESSER III Plan was written and gained preliminary approval from the school board in February 2022, the District collected feedback from students, staff, families and community members from February 7-28, 2022. The plan was reviewed and submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for approval, which was received in April 2022. The plan was then taken to the full board for final approval in May 2022 and posted to the public facing District webpage.

The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan was initially approved by the full school board on November 8, 2021. The school board

received updates regarding the plan on 5/9/22, 11/14/22 and 5/8/23 as required by the DPI. The Safe Return Plan has been posted on the public facing district webpage as required. In addition, periodic updates have been provided to the school board regarding ESSER III expenditures.

By upholding these standards of accountability, WRPS has demonstrated transparency to stakeholders, including the School Board, parents, educators, and the broader community. This action highlights the district's commitment to leveraging ESSER III funds effectively to address the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic while fostering an environment of trust and fiscal responsibility.

In Summary

All ESSER III Formula Grant Funds have been expended by the deadline of September 2024. A strategic objective was to utilize a portion of the funds to secure renewals for some of our most costly software programs. This action aims to alleviate the burden on the Fund 10 budget for the next two years. These software programs play an important role in providing educational support, consolidating comprehensive student data for instructional purposes, offering differentiated intervention based on individual student needs, and providing crucial support for math and reading instruction.

The Morning Jumpstart Program, a collaborative project with the Wisconsin Rapids Area Boys and Girls Club, has garnered immense community support and positive feedback. As a result of this positive feedback, the District has developed a sustainable funding solution to keep the program running beyond the ESSER III grant period.

The district aims to maintain a sense of stability in staffing; Nearly 100% of the teachers added through ESSER funds have been made “permanent” through attrition in regards to retiring or resigning teachers. The District will continue to analyze the positive effect the Student Engagement Facilitators had on student’s academic performance and overall social/emotional health and school engagement and determine the future of these positions that were funded, in part, through ESSER grant dollars.

Reports

The following chart provides the fiscal report outlining how the ESSER III Formula Grant dollars have been spent during the 3-year period of the grant.

Expenditure Totals as of September 1, 2024

ESSER III Final Budget			
General Education		Total Amount	
	Personnel	\$ 4,016,233.28	
	Purchased Services	\$ 1,577,721.93	
	Non-Capital Objects	\$ 289,443.54	
	Capital Objects	\$ 93,198.48	
			\$ 5,976,597.23
Special Education		Total Amount	
	Personnel	\$ 689,508.92	
	Non-Capital Objects	\$ 2,032.00	
			\$ 691,540.92
		Total Amount Budgeted	\$ 6,668,138.15
		Allocation	\$ 7,082,465.00
		Difference - Indirect Costs	\$ 414,326.85

Personnel

Includes:

- ☐ Classroom teachers to reduce class size
- ☐ Interventionists
- ☐ Student Engagement Facilitators
- ☐ Mentors for new hires
- ☐ Professional Development substitute teachers costs
- ☐ ESL teacher
- ☐ Bridge Program - teacher stipend
- ☐ Common School Fund Management Stipend
- ☐ Family Engagement Activities Stipends
- ☐ Health Aide
- ☐ Special Education Program Aide
- ☐ Special Education Specialty Teachers - Adaptive Phy Ed

Purchased Services

Includes:

- ☐ Therapy
- ☐ Internet Services to families in need + Kajeets
- ☐ Software programs for instruction
- ☐ Instructional Staff Training
- ☐ Non-Instructional Staff Training
- ☐ Morning Jumpstart
- ☐ Remodeling
- ☐ Zoom/Software to communicate between home and school
- ☐ Resources for graduating seniors - Signal Vine
- ☐ Field Trips - virtual and in person (after Covid)
- ☐ Miscellaneous Items

Non Capital Objects

Includes:

- ☐ Hygiene/Medical/Health Room Supplies and Equipment
- ☐ Books/Workbooks/Textbooks
- ☐ Desks/Manipulatives/Supplies/Storage/Cards/Chair bands
- ☐ Interventions
- ☐ Instructional Media
- ☐ Technology Supplies

Capital Objects

Includes:

- ☐ Educational Technology - Lu Projectors
- ☐ Remodeling
- ☐ Water cooler bottle fillers