

## **BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

March 23, 2021

### ***SUBJECT:***

Proposed Utilization of ESSER II Funds

### ***BACKGROUND INFORMATION:***

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II) resulted from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) that was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The SC Department of Education is allocated \$940.4 million in ESSER II funds. From that, our District is projected to receive \$28,203,447. Funds must be spent by September 30, 2023.

Allowable uses include the 12 activities allowed under ESSER I, plus three new ones.

### ***ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:***

The allowable uses include: any activity authorized by the ESEA of 1965 (including IDEA, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Perkins Act, McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act); coordination of preparedness and response efforts; provisions for principals and other school leaders to address the needs of their individual schools; activities to address the unique needs of students; development and implementation of procedures to improve preparedness and response efforts; training and professional development; sanitation services and supplies; planning & coordination during long-term closures; purchase of educational technology; provision of mental health services & supports; summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs; addressing learning loss among students (new for ESSER II); facility repairs & improvements to reduce the risk of virus transmission and exposures (new for ESSER II); improvement of indoor air quality in school facilities (new for ESSER II); and other activities for operation and continuity of services.

The Board has approved three components to date. At its February 9, 2021, meeting, the Board approved the extension of FFCRA-like leave coverage through June 30, 2021. At its February 23, 2021, meeting, the Board approved summer program pay rates for teachers and lead teachers. The Board approved \$750,000 for the purchase for HEPA filtration systems and replacement filters at its March 9, 2021 meeting. The attached spending proposal includes those previously-approved items. The remainder of the plan was developed based on input, discussions and considerations of district leadership, school leadership, and others. Costs estimates were based on best information currently available.

In the event of shortfalls or excesses compared to estimated costs, the Administration requests flexibility to shift available amounts, with Board approval, between categories. Guidelines allow amendments to the spending plan, if and as needed.

***RECOMMENDATION:***

Approve the ESSER II spending plan as proposed, including the pay rates for the ESSER II summer 2021 program.

***ATTACHMENT:***

ESSER II proposed spending plan

***PREPARED BY:***

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## **ESSER II PROPOSED SPENDING PLAN**

### **Summer Program**

**\$9,810,000**

The Administration recommends funding a summer program over each of the next three summers (2021, 2022, and 2023) to combat Covid-related learning loss. Staffing will include lead teachers, teachers, aides, nurses, bus drivers and monitors, and school food service staff. Initial estimates for staffing (to pay employees who would otherwise be off for the summer) and related summer program costs are \$3-plus million per year.

As part of this spending plan, the Administration recommends the following hourly pay rates for ESSER II summer work for summer 2021:

Lead teachers	\$40 per hour (approved February 23, 2021)
Teachers	\$37 per hour (approved February 23, 2021)
School nurses	\$30 per hour
Bus drivers	\$15 per hour
Aides (who also bus monitor)	\$15 per hour
Bus monitor only (no aide duties)	\$11 per hour
School food service manager	\$16 per hour
School food service operator	\$13 per hour

### **After School/Saturday School Program**

**\$ 1,125,000**

After school and Saturday school programs have commenced. The Administration proposes conducting the program over the next three semesters – spring 2021, fall 2021, and spring 2022. Employees will be paid at standard extra duty rates. The estimated cost per semester is \$375,000.

### **Early Intervention**

**\$ 4,000,000**

The Administration proposes staffing each elementary school with one early interventionist during the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 school years. The interventionists will be paid based on the teacher scale. The estimated salary and fringe cost per year is \$2,000,000. [Note: Almost every elementary school requested an interventionist among its 2021 – 2022 budget requests. This item has the potential to be recurring. In the event that these positions provide the desired results and the Board wishes to maintain, the costs can be built into the General Fund budget for the 2023 – 2024 school year and beyond unless other funding sources are available. In the event these positions are not maintained, normal year teacher turnover from resignations and retirements would provide ample opportunity to absorb the individuals into classroom positions. We will not place ourselves in a reduction-in-force scenario.]

### **Technology Curriculum Specialist**

**\$ 190,000**

With the 1:1 technology expansion came a significant need for additional instruction and curriculum support. This position will provide ongoing support and professional development on blended learning as part of Learning Virtually Everywhere, our district's 1:1 initiative. This position will also provide support to AIKEN INNOVATE teachers, students, and parents. This would be a 210-day position funded by ESSER II for the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 school years. [This item has the potential to be recurring and could be built into the 2023 – 2024 General Fund budget or paid from other available funding sources once ESSER II funding is no longer available.]

**Instructional Services Division - Various****\$ 2,000,000**

These funds would be used for training, supplies, intervention programs, etc. to meet the needs of our students and the programs described above. Any purchases will follow normal procurement and approval guidelines.

**FFCRA-like Extension****\$ 1,000,000**

Covid-leave benefits funded by the Federal government expired December 31, 2020. The School Board approved the extension of the benefits at its February 9, 2021, meeting. These benefits include covering 10 Covid-related leave days through June 30, 2021. The estimated cost of salary and fringe for those leave days is reflected. [Note: Employees may use a total of 10 Covid-related leave days between the original FFCRA and the ESSER II-funded extension. The approval did not cover an additional 10 days]

**PPE****\$ 500,000**

These funds would be used for face masks, face shields, desk shields, partitions, hand sanitizer, backpack sprayers, disinfecting wipes, etc.

**Facilities****\$ 2,793,000**

These funds would be utilized to reduce the spread of the virus in our school facilities and improve air quality. The Board approved \$750,000 (included in above amount) for HEPA air filtration systems and replacement filters at its March 9, 2021, meeting. The Administration proposes using remaining funds to retain a firm to conduct a survey of all the HVAC systems in our District to determine if they are best suited for the installation of Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) or Bipolar Ionization (BPI) devices. Based upon the results of the survey, research, and guidance from a mechanical engineering professional, a priority list of those systems would be developed and schools that are in greatest need of UVGI or BPI installation would be identified. High priority systems and schools will be those that are not able to adequately provide recommended levels of outside air and filtration

**Technology****\$ 6,002,000**

The District has purchased approximately 13,000 all-in-one laptops over the past year from various funding sources. Approximately 10,000 more are needed for a true 1:1 student ratio. Furthermore, as the ESSER II spending deadline nears, the District will be approaching a replacement cycle on its 1:1 devices. These funds would be used for 1:1 purchases and device replacements, totaling \$3,667,000, and to expand and update various classroom technologies that are at or nearing the end of their life cycles. Instructional cameras to aid with remote learning would cost an estimated \$835,000 for 1,670 classrooms. Many classrooms are in need for projector and interactive board replacements at a cost of approximately \$5,000 each. The proposal to replace and update equipment in 300 classrooms would cost \$1,500,000.

**Technology Staffing****\$ 780,000**

The technology expansion has increased the need for additional staff. The Board added six FTE over the past year – two as part of the original 2020 – 2021 budget, six more in a September 2020 midyear approval. Utilizing ESSER II funds would allow the District to fund these positions outside of the General Fund for the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 school years. The estimated cost for salary/fringe is \$65,000 per position per year. [This item has the potential to be

recurring and could be built into the 2023 – 2024 General Fund budget. The Administration foresees a need to maintain these positions going forward.]

**Total**

**\$28,200,000**

*Note: All items in the spending plan must somehow relate to Covid, combating its impacts on learning, combating the spread, future planning, etc.*