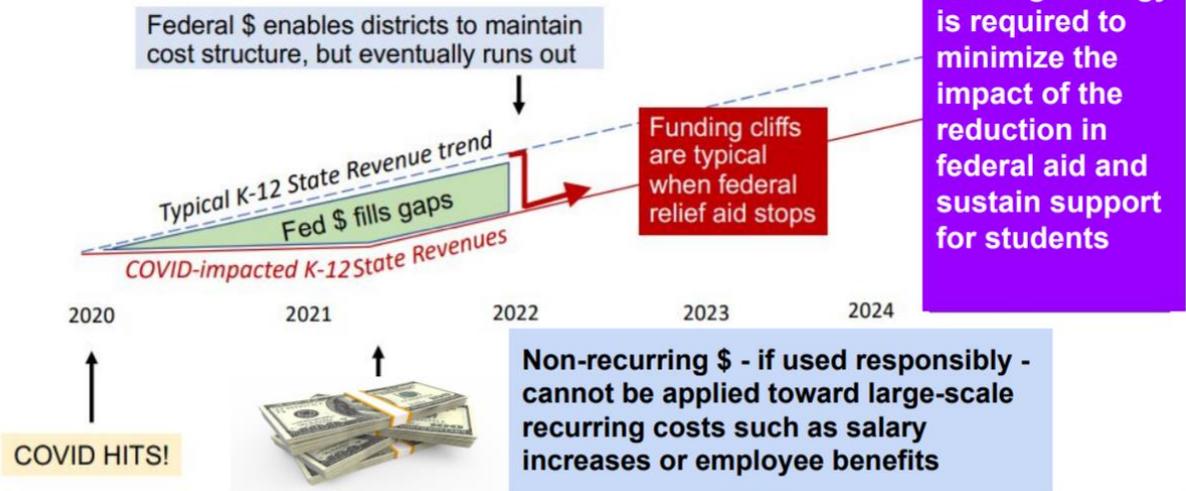


Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Due to the pandemic, schools across the country including Lowell Public Schools will receive additional categorical revenue through the ESSER Fund to help address COVID related learning loss. ESSER III figures have not been released but estimates are available. Massachusetts Teacher Association predicts that Lowell Public Schools will receive \$40.2 million whereas the Senate’s prediction is over \$43 million. Using these numbers, a 3-year plan to accelerate learning and overcome learning loss through increased support for students and school communities was developed.

These categorical grants must be spent according to the requirements of the grant. In summary, the main rule of the grants state that the funds must be spent to address learning loss over the next few years. In addition to this rule, we also must consider funding cliffs when planning for these dollars. We don’t want to spend the funds on costs that are needed even after the grants expire since we would face the funding cliff which occur when the cost is still there after federal relief ends. It is imperative that we use these non-recurring dollars responsibly. We should not use these funds towards large scale recurring costs such as salary increases that would not be affordable without these funds. On the other hand, despite caution we still need to make many hires to use these funds for their intention which is to address learning loss which will require many more positions albeit temporary.

ESSER grants are non-recurring and unlikely to be sustained with state or local revenue which can result in a “fiscal cliff”



Through the Fair Student Funding process, many were asked to participate and share views. Nearly 400 parents, teachers, principals and community members contributed through the School Site Councils and budget forums that were offered to share our plans and obtain input. We heard what was said and took everything into consideration. Since we can’t do everything, we had to use five guiding principles to

make the decisions. These principles include: 1) ensuring that the decisions/priorities are strategically aligned with the District's overarching plan for systemic improvement, 2) making sure that the decisions are research based and support empirical evidence, 3) focused on equity, 4) warranting community involvement which is essential to building an effective plan for accelerating learning in the classroom and 5) guaranteeing that there is responsible fiscal management in which fiscal cliffs are avoided.

Research and feedback from the community has shown that we need a multi-tiered support system to accelerate learning that can cut across two tiers: 1) districtwide support and 2) intensive support for the Renaissance Schools. This can be accomplished through five investments that include:

- 1) Extend Learning Time across the District
- 2) Support Teachers to Improve Classroom Practice
- 3) Support Students with Strategic, School-Based Interventions
- 4) Meeting the Non-Instructional Needs of Students and School Communities
- 5) Supporting the Home School Partnership

Each of these investments will support the multi-tiered support system that is need to address learning loss.

The investment in extending learning time for students will directly align with the strategic goal of improving academics and student achievement at every school site. This investment is important since additional learning time within the standard school calendar and outside of the school day are required to account for COVID related losses in academic time. Such losses include the reduction from the standard 180 days to 170 days for all student in FY20/21 as well as the inconsistent daily attend and engagement levels for students who experienced difficulty in the remote environments. Extending learning time will require the elimination of the 6 half days which would add 3 days of learning per year without shifting the start or end dates of the overall school calendar. In addition, both the afterschool program and summer programs would be expanded to include programs at every school in the district and for every student identified as needing additional academic support. This investment would cost \$8.7 million over a three-year period.

The next investment needed for the multi-tiered support system is supporting students with strategic, school based interventions. This investment also aligns with the strategic goal of improving academics and student achievement at every school site AND the goal of ensuring that every school enjoys a safe and welcoming culture. This investment is important since the impact of COVID 19 has been found to be more significant for some students. This impact ranges from academic challenges to social and emotional wellness. Such disparities require school based resources that can be tailored by school communities to meet the individual needs of each child. This investment results in schools being able to hire more positions to address learning loss over the next few years. In addition, this investment will support the creation of a full time virtual school for students in grades 7 to 12 as a permanent addition to the District's Alternative School portfolio. This will allow us to continue to offer remote learning to those who flourished in such an environment. This investment includes the \$4 million increase to school site budgets, an additional social worker and staffing for the Virtual Academy.

Supporting teachers to improve classroom practice is another investment that would directly align with our strategic goal of improving academics and student achievement at every school site. This is important since relevant and meaningful professional development for teachers has been consistently

found to improve student learning. There are direct correlations documented between teacher quality and student performance across multiple studies. This investment would result in 34 additional hours of professional learning time per year for every teacher and instructional support provider in the District which would total more than 100 hours over the three year grant cycle. Such professional learning would include how to embed culturally and linguistically sustaining practices within the curriculum and the implementation of a Collaborative Coaching and Learning model. This \$12.2 million investment would cover professional development, CLSP Coordinator, Deputy CAO, Academic Coaches and Data Inquiry Facilitators to support improving classroom practice.

The investment of meeting the non-instructional needs of students and school communities aligns with the strategic goal of ensuring that every school enjoys a safe and welcoming culture. This is important since other factors beyond classroom teaching can have a significant impact on whether students have access to meaningful learning. School communities which have historically required additional support will need even more resources as they work to reconnect and re-engage students who have been disconnected from the learning environment for extended periods of time through the pandemic. In addition, some school buildings require physical upgrades to create classroom environments that are more conducive to teaching and learning now and into the future. This \$23 million investment will yield a Student Resource Center, School Climate Specialists at the Renaissance Schools, investments in HVAC and significant investments in our multi-year digital learning plan. Such will require support such as a Director of Technology, Districtwide Safety Coordinator, Director of Adult Education, climate specialists, etc.

Supporting the home-school partnership is an investment that will align with the strategic goal of increasing community engagement and empowering families as partners. This is important because the connection between home and school has historically been found to be an important factor in the success of students in the classroom. That partnership became even more critical in the remote learning environment and will continue to be essential as the students transition back to in person learning in the fall. This \$2.7 million investment will establish a Parent University to increase family literacy and fund bilingual liaisons at every school in the Renaissance Network.

All in all, these five investments will allow us to build the multi-tiered support system necessary to address learning loss. Such investments ensure that our financial plan mirrors our educational plan by aligning with our strategic plan goals. Attached you will find a summary spreadsheet showing the cost initiatives with funding sources for the next three years. In addition, there are five spreadsheets listed that shows the spending plan by investment.