



**Voluntown Board of Education**  
**195 Main St.**  
**PO BOX 129**  
**Voluntown, Connecticut 06384**  
**Tel: (860) 376-9167 Fax: (860) 376-3385**

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June 23, 2021

Dear Parents, Families, Staff, and Community,

Voluntown Public Schools is slated to receive \$306,105 in a grant called the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund. Unlike the previous two federal relief funds, ARP ESSER requires state education agencies and local districts to create plans that focus on renewal, reducing opportunity gaps, accelerating learning, and advancing equity for all students. Of the total amount allocated to each district at least 20 percent of funds (\$61,221) are set-aside funds to be used to address learning recovery through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups. The remaining funds may be used for a wide range of activities to address needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic, including any activity authorized by the ESEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), or Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins CTE).

This message contains an overview of grant priorities, examples of allowable expenditures, and a draft of the district's effort to address grant requirements. After reviewing this document, which contains an explanation of the grant, please contact me if you have any feedback. A summary of the district's initial proposals are also provided with an explanation of how and when funds will be expended. Due to the ever evolving conditions in schools, this plan is subject to change to best meet the needs of our students.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Adam S. Burrows  
Superintendent of Schools  
[aburrows@voluntownct.org](mailto:aburrows@voluntownct.org)  
860-376-9167

## ARP ESSER Allowable Expenditures

Specifically, ARP ESSER funds may be used to develop strategies and implement public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on reopening and operating schools to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff, as well as:

- coordinating preparedness and response efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19;
- training and professional development on minimizing the spread of infectious diseases;
- purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean facilities;
- repairing and improving school facilities to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards;
- improving indoor air quality;
- addressing the needs of children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth; • planning for or implementing activities during long-term closures, including providing meals to eligible students and providing technology for online learning;
- purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, connectivity, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment) for students that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including students from low-income families and children with disabilities;
- providing mental health services and supports, including through the implementation of evidence-based full-service community schools and the hiring of counselors;
- planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school programs;
- addressing learning loss; and
- other activities that are necessary to maintain operation of and continuity of and services, including continuing to employ existing or hiring new LEA and school staff

Any district that receives ARP ESSER funds must, within 30 days of receiving the funds, make publicly available on its website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.

Voluntown's *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* is on our website, <https://district.voluntownct.org/> . Once you review the website you can provide feedback to the Superintendent, if desired.

## ARP ESSER Priorities

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has outlined the ARP ESSER grant priorities in five categories. The federal government requires that at least 20% of the grant funding must address learning loss, which is captured in the first CSDE priority. Voluntown anticipates that we will allocate 20% of the grant funding to support learning loss through curriculum, instruction, and assessment resources. The five CSDE priorities are described below.

1. **Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal:** Advancing equity and access in education for students in Connecticut remain top priorities. Resources must focus on academic support and recovery to accelerate learning for our students, particularly those disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
2. **Family Connection:** The complex issues brought about by the pandemic have made it clear that the success of schools, families, and communities are interdependent and all have a stake in students' well-being. Investing in mutually beneficial school-family-community partnerships will not only support students to achieve their full potential, but it will also strengthen families and stabilize communities.
3. **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of the Students and or School Staff:** The school community experience during the pandemic has been one of collective challenge and trauma. We must be prepared to use strategic wraparound social, emotional, and mental health supports to restore and successfully re-engage our school communities.
4. **Strategic Use of Technology, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide:** Applying what we have learned during the pandemic requires careful consideration of the importance of student access to in-person learning and enrichment balanced with the strategic use of technology to engage and expand learning opportunities. Resources should be allocated to maintain or upgrade access to technology and connectivity for the long-term and to ensure that technology training and support is provided to students, school staff, and families to maximize student outcomes.
5. **Building Safe and Healthy School:** Ensuring our school buildings are safe and healthy environments that enable all of our students to excel remains an important aspect of recovering from COVID-19. Resources may be used consistent with federal relief funding allowable uses as a means to continue facility repairs and improvements, such as improving ventilation and providing more space for distancing. Resources should continue to be allocated to support the physical health and safety of our students and staff (e.g., to ensure adequate personal protective equipment).

## **Voluntown Public Schools ARP ESSER Plan - *Draft***

The ARP ESSER funds may be used through September 30, 2024. The total grant allocation is \$306,105. It is our intention to allocate about \$184,330 in 2021-22, \$72,570 in 2022-23, and \$49,205 in 2023-24. Our school system intends to address each of these grant priorities in the following ways:

### **Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal:**

Voluntown Public Schools will bolster academic rigor through targeted interventions, summertime enrichment opportunities, after school programs, and provide additional training for staff through an instructional coaching model. The district will also utilize academic software to access and support student needs.

### **Family Connection:**

The district will work to provide resources and services to families in Voluntown.

### **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of the Students and or School Staff (use other grants):**

Voluntown Public Schools continues to support Social and Emotional Learning in its schools. The district is currently also using its local budget and other grants to support this priority.

### **Strategic Use of Technology, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide:**

Prior to the pandemic the district's technology infrastructure was significantly outdated and inadequate. The district has created a sustainable technology plan to ensure students have access to the necessary resources they need. The grant will provide professional development and updated laptops for teachers and chromebooks for students.

### **Building Safe and Healthy School:**

All classrooms in the district have air conditioning. The gymnasium and hallways are now priorities. The district will utilize ARP ESSER funding to improve our HVAC systems.

## Voluntown ARP ESSER Grant Allocation - \$306,105

<b>Voluntown ARP ESSER III Grant Allocation - \$306,105 (\$61,221 Set-Aside required)</b>					
<b><u>ESSER III Priorities</u></b>	<b><u>FY 22</u></b>	<b><u>FY 23</u></b>	<b><u>FY 24</u></b>	<b><u>ESSER Categories</u></b>	<b><u>FY 24 Local Budget Impact</u></b>
After School Programs	\$ 10,462	\$ 10,462	\$ 3,500	1	No
Summer School Enrichment	\$ 10,463	\$ 10,463	\$ 4,500	1	No
Instructional Resources and Assistive Technology Access	\$ 3,791	\$ 3,790	\$ 3,790	1	No
Community Outreach	\$ 3,041	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	2	Maybe
Social Worker	\$ 16,229	\$ 16,228	\$ 8,000	3	No
Professional Development	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	4	No
Connectivity/Wi-Fi Upgrades	\$ 4,844	\$ 5,200	\$ 4,000	4	Yes
Teacher/Student Laptop/Chromebook/Technology Upgrades	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 9,215	4	Yes
HVAC Upgrades (gym/hallways)	\$ 66,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	5	Maybe
Pavilion- Outdoor Classroom/Walkways	\$ 58,000	\$ 6,227	\$ 6,000	5	Maybe
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 184,330</b>	<b>\$ 72,570</b>	<b>\$ 49,205</b>		
				<b>\$ 306,105</b>	

*The above allocations are initial projections of identified and projected priorities and may have adjustments based on information obtained from the comments and input of various community groups. Grant allocations require final review and authorization or approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education.*

*Drafted 6/23/21, Rev 8/11/2021*