

Press Releases



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

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Governor Lamont Announces Connecticut Receives \$111 Million in Coronavirus Relief Aid for Schools

School Districts Can Submit Applications to the State; Funding Will Be Allocated Based on Greatest Need

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Ned Lamont today announced that the State of Connecticut is receiving \$111 million in federal coronavirus relief aid for the state's school districts that will be used to support continued learning and address educational disruptions due to the global pandemic.

The funding was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Security (CARES) Act that was adopted by Congress in March. It will complement the \$27.8 million already announced for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund. ESSERF is the main federal funding stream dedicated to supporting the state's pre-K through 12 system during the COVID-19 crisis. The federal government allows for significant flexibility in how the state and local school districts spend the grant so that existing education funds can be repurposed to areas of highest need, mitigate fiscal impacts, and immediately address educational disruptions.

Governor Lamont said that school districts in Connecticut have already received their full state education grant allocations for FY20, despite the cancellation of in-person classes for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

"This global pandemic is causing unprecedented consequences that we have never experienced in our lifetimes, and our school systems have been forced to respond in creative ways," **Governor Lamont said.** "I applaud our many teachers and educational staff who have been working through this trying time to provide distance learning and continue engaging our students. Our administration is determined to work with school districts to ensure that we can maintain these efforts and every student has access to the

educational opportunities that they deserve. I thank our Congressional delegation for securing these federal funds to support this effort.”

While Connecticut was awarded a total of \$111 million under EESERF, \$11.1 million will be reserved for state-level activities, and the balance of \$99.9 million will be distributed to local school districts based on the proportion of Title I funding they received for fiscal year 2020.

The CARES Act requires public school districts that receive ESSERF or Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Funds to provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools in the same manner as equitable services are provided in Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Control of funds for services and assistance provided to non-public school students and teachers under the CARES Act programs must remain under the control of the public school district that receives the funding. Similar to how a public school district provides equitable services under the ESEA, the district is responsible for initiating the consultation process and must contact officials in all non-public schools within the respective district to notify them of the opportunity for their students and teachers to obtain equitable services under the CARES Act programs. Therefore, no funds may go directly to a non-public school and non-public schools must consult with the local public school district in which they are located to determine allocation and receipt of the funds.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is in the process of developing an application process for school districts, which will include specific questions pertaining to how the district determined which areas of need to focus on, which strategies they anticipate utilizing, and how remote learning will be part of their solution. In an effort to expedite the allocation of funds, the department plans on providing ongoing technical assistance to districts with a particular focus on those with the greatest needs. Regular feedback from districts will be expected as they solidify the strategies they plan to use to address student learning gaps, provide universal access to high-quality remote learning, and safely reopen schools.

State Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona is sending a letter to every superintendent in the state with information about the funds.

“While ensuring equity and access to education has always been our top priority, this pandemic has exacerbated the opportunity gaps that have always persisted for our most vulnerable students, such as students with special needs and English learners,” **Commissioner Cardona said.** “Now more than ever, we remain committed to breaking down the barriers that result in a lack of equitable access to technology, connectivity, and high quality learning materials. We acknowledge districts are expending considerable resources as they navigate these uncharted waters. The department has developed an expedited process to allocate this federal grant as the funding will be critical to bolstering districts’ efforts to meet the areas of greatest need within their school communities and continue providing education to all students in a way that is accessible, equitable and meaningful.”

The federal funding will complement state resources intended to sustain local school districts' capacity and their efforts to provide equitable access to high quality opportunities for continuity of education for all students. The State Department of Education has provided all districts with **guidance around four statewide priorities**:

1. Ensuring that all students have access to appropriate technology and connectivity;
2. Access to high quality curriculum that addresses the needs of all learners including students with disabilities;
3. Addressing student learning gaps and safely reopening schools; and
4. Social and emotional supports for educators and students as they transition back to school.

Districts may use funds for any activity authorized under the major federal grant categories including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, or the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

Under ESSERF, types of eligible activities include:

- Planning for and coordination between schools and families during long-term closures;
- Purchasing educational and assistive technology (e.g. hardware, software, and connectivity);
- Providing mental health services and supports; and
- Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning, supplemental after-school programs and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.