

COVID-19 IMPACT AND RECOVERY: AN EQUITY ANALYSIS OF RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICTS' PLANNED USE OF ESSER III FUNDS



The COVID-19 pandemic impacted children and youth in many ways, from concerns and fears about the illness, grief and loss of loved ones, loss of parental employment and financial stressors -- to school closures and distance learning/hybrid models. These challenges resulted in significant loss of instructional time, increased mental health concerns, and exacerbated inequities. These challenges especially affected low-income students, Multilingual Learners, students receiving special education services, students in the foster care system, students experiencing homelessness, and Students of Color.¹

In Rhode Island, parents, educators, administrators, and state leaders tried to keep students learning during the pandemic. **COVID-19 recovery funds are critical in helping school districts build upon lessons learned during school closures and distance learning, recover from the lost instructional time, and build stronger, more equitable education systems.**

This report analyzes the ESSER III plans of the 36 traditional public school districts in Rhode Island. Analysis excludes costs associated with employee benefits, payroll taxes, LEAP District Support Program funds, ARP Homeless Children and Youth funds, and funds not yet budgeted by districts.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund is part of the *American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021*. ARP ESSER, also known as **ESSER III**, provides funding to states and school districts to reopen schools safely, maximize in-person instruction, and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students, families, and educators.² Rhode Island school districts were allocated \$373.6 million in ESSER III funds.²

In addition to ESSER III funds, school districts received funds from the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, also known as **ESSER I**, and the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act*, also known as **ESSER II**.³ Rhode Island school districts will receive a total of \$581.6 million from these three federal stimulus packages.⁴

Allowable Expenses

ESSER III funds can be used to create transformative change that students and families want by providing equitable resources needed to help students thrive academically, physically, and emotionally. A minimum of 20% of funds must be used to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based interventions that respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs; and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Students of Color, students from low-income families, students receiving special education services, Multilingual Learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care. The remaining funds can be used for a wide range of activities.⁵

School districts have until September 30, 2023, to commit their ESSER III funds and an additional 12 months to spend those funds. School districts must review and are encouraged to revise their ESSER III plans every six months.⁶

We hope that this analysis will provide opportunities for districts, students, families, and community members to learn from each other and offer new ideas for how districts can use ESSER III funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on students, families, and educators (with particular attention to providing resources to meet the needs of students who were most impacted by the pandemic).

ESSER III Allocations to Rhode Island School Districts

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALLOCATION
Barrington	\$643,752
Bristol Warren	\$4,245,543
Burrillville	\$3,453,025
Central Falls	\$15,140,046
Chariho	\$2,638,343
Coventry	\$5,395,095
Cranston	\$20,151,201
Cumberland	\$5,022,733
East Greenwich	\$537,564
East Providence	\$11,751,033
Exeter-West Greenwich	\$1,162,706
Foster	\$403,077
Foster-Glocester	\$1,193,420
Glocester	\$1,295,939
Jamestown	\$762,934
Johnston	\$5,777,605
Lincoln	\$4,306,681
Little Compton	\$143,469
Middletown	\$2,125,183
Narragansett	\$1,499,181
New Shoreham	\$0*
Newport	\$6,866,975
North Kingstown	\$3,957,614
North Providence	\$6,299,178
North Smithfield	\$1,521,381
Pawtucket	\$31,646,259
Portsmouth	\$1,994,992
Providence	\$128,650,821
Scituate	\$1,729,154
Smithfield	\$1,771,038
South Kingstown	\$2,997,282
Tiverton	\$1,701,788
Warwick	\$12,196,862
West Warwick	\$8,262,011
Westerly	\$4,504,589
Woonsocket	\$28,930,115
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>\$36,134,835</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>\$6,073,275</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>\$744,556</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>\$204,367,241</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>\$126,311,348</i>
Rhode Island	\$373,631,255

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Funds *New Shoreham was ineligible for an ESSER III allocation from the U.S. Department of Education based on the allocation methodology used by the federal government. The Rhode Island Department of Education provided \$112,263 to the district from the department's ESSER III funds to ensure every school district in Rhode Island received an ESSER III allocation.

LEARNING, EQUITY, AND ACCELERATED PATHWAYS (LEAP) TASK FORCE

In February 2021, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) convened the LEAP Task Force composed of more than 30 educators, school and community leaders, parents, and education experts with the goal of identifying ways for Rhode Island students to recover from the learning challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and widened by systemic inequities. The final [LEAP Task Force Report](#) provided recommendations that would help Rhode Island rebuild the educational system, help students recover from lost instructional time, and offer greater access to enriching learning opportunities for students who have historically struggled or experienced barriers to these opportunities.⁷

The LEAP Task Force Report identified the following enabling conditions necessary to meet the urgency of the moment.

1. Address systemic racial inequities in Rhode Island's educational system.
2. Center the voices of students and families in all work, across the entire system.
3. Prioritize cross-sector partnership and intentional collaboration across Rhode Island's entire education system—between pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and institutions of higher education, between school districts and community-based organizations, between municipalities, mayors, and the state—to implement collective impact approaches.
4. Codify collective action, metrics, and shared accountability across all systems.

The LEAP Task Force Report identified the following priorities to accelerate student learning.

1. Energize school communities—students and educators—by launching a statewide back-to-school campaign, with particular attention to students who are chronically absent and over-aged and under-credited.
2. Ensure all students have access to high-quality instruction as well as personalized support from adults, through extended learning, partnerships for before and after school, and summer learning opportunities that are undergirded by high-quality materials and resources.
3. Universally screen all students for academic and social-emotional needs and align resources to those needs.
4. Improve and support student transitions across grades and systems.
5. Close the digital divide.

LEAP District Support Program

The LEAP District Support Program (DSP) is an equity-driven two-year program that helps school districts disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 align their post-pandemic recovery efforts to the recommendations of the LEAP Task Force. LEAP DSP will provide more than \$20 million in matching funds to invest in programs that will accelerate student learning. LEAP DSP school districts are Central Falls, East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.⁸ Funds provided through the LEAP DSP programs are not included in this analysis.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The federal guidelines require school districts to seek public input and to take those comments into consideration when developing the plan. The RIDE application for ESSER III funds required evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement.^{9,10}

Sixty-one percent (22) of school districts used surveys to solicit input. Many of these surveys were sent to parents and teachers. Fewer districts included students in surveys to solicit input. Thirty-six percent (13) of school districts sought input through student and/or parent groups, and 19% (7) of school districts used town hall meetings to solicit feedback. Most districts also utilized existing structures including school committee meetings and School Improvement Teams to solicit feedback and develop their plan.

Surveys	61%
Student/Parent Groups	36%
Town Hall Meetings	19%
n=36	

Voces Con Poder (Voices With Power)

Central Falls Public Schools used a participatory budgeting process called *Voces Con Poder* to decide how \$100,000 of their ESSER II funds would be budgeted. In this program, 36 community members served as community delegates, meeting twice a week for six weeks to solicit ideas from the larger public, develop potential plans, and present these plans to the public for a vote. More than 150 parents and students participated in the process. In addition to *Voces Con Poder*, Central Falls engaged stakeholders using a variety of methods including 400 home visits, mailers, phone calls, block parties, student input through classroom activities, staff focus groups, and visioning workshops.

DATA-INFORMED PLANNING

The RIDE application for ESSER III funds required school districts to submit the data used to understand the needs of students. Districts were encouraged to disaggregate this data by language status, income, housing status, and race and ethnicity, and to identify goals based on this data.¹¹

All districts used assessment data such as the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, SAT, and Star assessments, 23 (64%) districts used *SurveyWorks*, an annual survey administered by Rhode Island public schools to parents, teachers/staff, and administrators that includes several measures of school climate, and 20 (61%) districts used attendance data to inform the district ESSER III plan and budget. Some districts used medical referrals, disciplinary records, social worker observations, social-emotional screeners, early warning systems, and early childhood assessments to inform their ESSER III plan and budget.

Data Used by Rhode Island Public Schools	
Assessments	100%
<i>SurveyWorks</i>	64%
Attendance	61%
n=36	

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Students who are frequently absent from school miss critical academic and social learning opportunities and are at risk of disengagement from school, academic failure, and dropping out.¹²

Groups hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic had the highest levels of chronic absence.¹³

In Rhode Island during the 2020-2021 school year, Native American (43%), Hispanic (42%), and Black (36%) K-12 students had higher rates of chronic absence than Asian (19%) and white (18%) students. Rates were also higher for Multilingual Learners (44%), low-income students (43%), and students with IEPs (34%) than for all students (28%).¹⁴

Chronic Absenteeism	
2 School Districts	\$463,091

Five percent of school districts (Johnston and Newport) allocated a total of \$463,091 to address attendance and chronic absence.

Newport Public Schools allocated \$430,000 to hire **Student Attendance Coordinators** who will track student data, review information with attendance teams and provide interventions for students who need additional support and resources to attend school. Since public transportation in Newport is limited, the district intends to purchase **15-passenger vans** that will pick up students who miss the bus and parents who need rides to participate in school meetings.

LITERACY

In Rhode Island in 2021, 40% of third graders met expectations on the *RICAS* English language arts assessment. Twenty-three percent of low-income third graders met expectations, compared to 56% of higher-income third graders. There were also large disparities by race and ethnicity as well as by language status and special education status. Fifteen percent of third graders who were identified as experiencing homelessness met expectations in English language arts, compared to 41% of third graders who were not identified as experiencing homelessness.¹⁵

It is critical for students to continue to be instructed in grade-level content that is scaffolded with supports. Using materials below grade-level can reinforce low expectations and exacerbate disparities in grade-level reading.¹⁶

Thirty districts (83%) allocated a total of \$13,531,045 for literacy programs, reading interventionists, specialists, curriculum, and training on the science of reading.

<u>Literacy</u>	
30 School Districts	\$13,531,045

MATH

Nationally, disparities in math assessments increased by approximately 20% between low-income and higher-income elementary schools because of the pandemic.¹⁷ In Rhode Island in the 2020-2021 school year, 10% of low-income third graders met expectations in math, compared with 38% of higher-income third graders. There also were large gaps by race and ethnicity, with 39% of Asian and 35% of white third graders meeting expectations, compared with 10% of Black, 11% of Hispanic, and 11% of Native American students. This large gap is also seen in eighth-grade results, with 31% of Asian and 22% of white eighth graders meeting expectations, compared with less than 5% of Black and Native American students, and 5% of Hispanic students.¹⁸

Twenty-eight districts (78%) allocated a total of \$11,179,326 for math programs, curriculum, and staffing including math specialists, math interventionists, and math coaches.

<u>Math</u>	
28 School Districts	\$11,179,326

INTERVENTION AND TARGETED SUPPORTS

Interventions provide a variety of targeted supports to all students who need them. Eighteen districts allocated \$19,775,730 to intervention programs and supports including investments in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), credit recovery programs, and high dosage tutoring occurring during the school day.

<u>Interventions and Targeted Supports</u>	
18 School Districts	\$19,775,730

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/ SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The caregivers of more than 140,000 children in the United States died due to COVID-19 -- with Youth of Color disproportionately impacted. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing struggle for racial justice has accelerated the worsening crisis in child and adolescent mental health, and health professionals in Rhode Island have witnessed soaring rates of mental health challenges among children, adolescents, and their families. In May 2022, the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Rhode Island Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Hasbro Children's Hospital, and Bradley Hospital joined together to declare a **Rhode Island State of Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health**.¹⁹

The LEAP Task Force Report encourages school districts to adopt new approaches to social-emotional wellness that acknowledge anxiety, trauma, and grief of students and teachers and to develop an integrated strategy to address the racial dimension of social-emotional wellness and the pandemic's disproportional impact on Communities of Color.²⁰

Thirty districts (83%) allocated funds to social-emotional learning and mental and behavioral health. This includes funding for school psychologists, social workers, student assistance counselors, guidance counselors, and social-emotional curriculum and programs.

<u>Social-Emotional Learning/ Mental and Behavioral Health</u>	
30 School Districts	\$40,000,912

***Chariho Public Schools** allocated \$20,000 for **therapy dog counseling** and support.*

***South Kingstown** allocated \$25,600 for **teacher assistants to become certified behavior technicians** to support students in the classroom setting and \$26,598 for training all teachers and staff in **trauma-informed practices**, implicit bias, cultural awareness, and culturally responsive practices.*

***West Warwick Public Schools** allocated \$65,369 to hire a **therapeutic art teacher** to support student social-emotional needs during the school day.*

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

In Rhode Island, hundreds of community organizations provide services and programming to youth before school, after school, and during summer and school vacations. High-quality, organized afterschool and summer programs improve the supervision and safety of youth, promote positive social skills, and, with sufficient dosage, improve student achievement.^{21,22,23} Out-of-School Time programs have provided crucial services to students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic including assistance with academics, accessing technology, and addressing food insecurity for families.

Twenty-seven districts (75%) allocated a total of \$12,656,105 for Out-of-School Time programs including school district-operated academic and enrichment programs, credit recovery programs, and high dosage tutoring occurring before school, after school, or during the summer.

<u>Out-of-School Time</u>	
27 School Districts	\$12,656,105

There is an opportunity to use ESSER III funds for community-based Out-of-School Time programs.

***Middletown Public Schools** is collaborating with the town of Middletown to use the town’s ARP funding to expand the **Beyond the Bell** program. **Beyond the Bell** provides afterschool support, a K-12 summer camp program, and school vacation intervention programs. **Beyond the Bell** leverages partnerships with community-based organizations like the **Middletown Child Opportunity Zone, Boys and Girls Club, and the Newport YMCA**. Students who are below grade-level, Multilingual Learners, differently-abled or underserved during the COVID-19 pandemic are identified by the district’s intervention coordinators and further supported by a family service coordinator.*

***Providence Public Schools** will invest \$5,242,803 in several extended learning initiatives including the **K-12 Academic Support Program, a Saturday Academy, RICAS and SAT Bootcamps, and CTE Summer Programs**.*

***Westerly Public Schools** allocated \$473,655 for Out-of-School Time programming, including high dosage tutoring and hands-on enrichment learning opportunities in partnership with the **Westerly Recreation Dept, Southern Rhode Island Conservation District, Westerly Land Trust and Westerly Education Center**, for Out-of-School Time programming.*

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Community-based organizations are often entrusted frontline providers of crucial services that close the gap between resources and needs unmet by schools and government agencies. The LEAP Task Force Report directed school districts to leverage community partners to provide additional instruction, enrichment, summer learning and extended learning opportunities.²⁴

Thirteen districts (36%) allocated a total of \$4,910,036 to partner with community-based organizations. These partnerships will provide a wide variety of supports to schools including social-emotional learning programming, academic supports, student transitions into school, out-of-school time programs, translation services, and diversity, equity, and inclusion consultancy.

Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

13 School Districts	\$4,910,036
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Newport has budgeted \$604,000 to partner with **Newport Community Schools, EAB Support, Highlander Institute, FAB Newport, Boys and Girls Club, Bike Newport, Conexión Latina, Martin Luther King Center, Sankofa, and Advocacy Solutions** to provide high-quality summer programming and professional development to support differently-abled students, Multilingual Learners, and Students of Color.

Providence Public Schools has budgeted \$797,000 to support teacher's assistants and part-time teachers to become full time teachers or fully certified through partnerships with **Aspiring Latino Leaders, Latinx Teachers' Fellowship, and The Rhode Island School for Progressive Education**.

Coventry Public Schools allocated \$150,000 to partner with the **Westwood YMCA and Coventry Parks and Recreation Department** to offer students in grades K-8 social-emotional supports and high-dosage tutoring.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Families play an essential role in the teaching and learning process and are an important contributor to the success of an education system. The relationships between families and schools became even more important during school closures and hybrid learning. The relationships between families and schools must continue to improve to meet the needs that have arisen from the pandemic.²⁵ Meaningful family engagement should be centered on the family experience and should provide equitable access to family engagement and leadership opportunities.²⁶

Ten districts (28%) allocated funds to parent engagement including communication tools, translators, and programming.

Family Engagement

10 School Districts	\$930,928
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Providence Public Schools will invest \$20,000 to expand its **Parent Academy** opportunities. Funding will support stipends for parent participation in course offerings, headphones for translation services, Chromebooks, and supplies.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Nationally, Multilingual Learners (MLL) are among the student groups most impacted by the instructional disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance learning was especially challenging for Multilingual families. Many Multilingual Learners and their families had increased caregiving and financial responsibilities which impacted their ability to participate in distance learning.²⁷

In Rhode Island in 2021, 12% of third-grade MLLs met expectations in reading compared to 45% of Non-Multilingual Learners, and 6% of third-grade MLLs students met expectations in math compared to 28% of Non-Multilingual Learners on the *Rhode*

Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS). Multilingual Learners need additional supports to achieve proficiency in reading and math.²⁸

The LEAP Task Force Report recommended collaborative and coordinated planning between school districts and community-based organizations to meet the needs of Multilingual Learners including intentional grouping of Multilingual Learners, providing professional development for educators and enrichment opportunities for Multilingual Learners, expanding dual language programs, and honoring and elevating the assets of Multilingual Learners.²⁹

Fifteen school districts (42%) allocated funds to explicitly support Multilingual Learners. This includes funding multilingual paraprofessionals, translators, and stipends for educator ESL certifications.

Multilingual Learners	
15 School Districts	\$19,720,092

Central Falls Public Schools has allocated \$200,000 in **tuition assistance** for its TA to BA program that will help Central Falls teacher assistants to obtain a degree or become certified in Special Education or English as a Second Language. The program aims to help to retain and grow current members of the Central Falls staff while also diversifying the educator pipeline. Central Falls has also allocated \$39,000 to the **Newcomer MLL program** which assists recent immigrants at the secondary school level who have little or no English proficiency and limited or no formal education in their home countries.

Newport Public Schools has allocated \$33,000 to partner with **Conexión Latina** to provide educational supports to Multilingual Learners including hosting after-school programs, support for tutoring and mentoring, and helping MLLs get involved in team sports, arts, music and other enrichment programs. Conexión Latina will work with the **College Planning and Counseling Center of Rhode Island** to facilitate college applications, FAFSA, SAT prep, and other college readiness opportunities. Through the support of an Education Navigator, Conexión Latina will serve as link between the school department and families and will help support MLL families including helping with school registration, obtaining school supplies, enrolling in Out-of-School Time opportunities, and overcome barriers that prevent MLL students from attending school. Newport Public Schools is also investing in **long-term coaching** that supports Multilingual Learners and culturally-responsive instructional practices.

Woonsocket Public Schools allocated \$2,500,000 for high-quality ELA and Math instructional material adoption and implementation in **dual language Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms**.

STUDENTS WITH INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS (IEPs)

Nationally, school districts reported a variety of logistical and instructional difficulties in delivering special education services during distance learning causing disruption to necessary services and many of these students experienced more mental health challenges than their peers -- resulting in exacerbated academic disparities for students with disabilities.³⁰ Students with IEPs benefit from targeted interventions that focus on foundational academic skills as well as behavior and mental health.³¹

In Rhode Island, students receiving special education services are much less likely to meet or exceed expectations on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*. In 2021, only 12% of third graders with an IEP met or exceeded expectations in ELA and 9% in math, compared with 46% in ELA and 28% in math for students without special education needs.³² The LEAP Task Force Report strongly encourages school districts to be relentless and creative in deploying available personnel to meet the needs of differently-abled students.³³

Twenty school districts (56%) allocated funding explicitly to meet the needs of differently-abled students including funding salaries of paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, technology aids, and capital projects to become ADA compliant.

Students Receiving Special Education Services and Supports

20 School Districts \$5,358,531

*Exeter-West Greenwich (\$20,400) and Westerly (\$22,963) allocated funds for **compensatory services** for high need students.*

*Jamestown allocated \$16,240 to collaborate with the Jamestown Recreation Department to provide extended learning opportunities for differently-abled students to be in recreational activities with non-disabled peers to reinforce social skills. Teachers assistants will accompany students to recreation programs to assist with the **carryover of IEP goals** and to provide guidance in social interactions.*

Pawtucket budgeted \$1,709,782 to support differently-abled students including capital improvements for upgraded enhancements to ADA bathrooms to include lifts and enhanced changing tables. The district will hire a Special Education teacher and purchase special education adaptive equipment and software.

STUDENTS OF COLOR/STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE/ HOMELESS STUDENTS/ LGBTQ+ YOUTH

School Districts Addressing Needs of Student Subgroups		
<u>Subgroup</u>	<u>School Districts</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Students of Color	8	\$912,000
Students Experiencing Homelessness	2	\$9,220
LGBTQ+ Youth	2	\$1,200,000
Students in Foster Care	0	\$0

Students experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+ youth, students in foster care, low-income students, and Students of Color can all benefit from a multitude of ESSER III investments like interventions, out-of-school time programs, literacy and math curriculum, and investments in mental and behavioral health supports. However, these students may have additional needs that are unique to their lived experiences and to the impact of COVID-19 on these communities.

Students of Color

Students of Color were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Black children are 14% of the total child population in the U.S. but accounted for 20% of all children who lost a parent to COVID-19 through early 2021. Higher economic insecurity, increased housing instability, increased child hunger, and school closures and transition to hybrid learning impacted the academic opportunities and mental health of many Black, Latinx, and Native American students and increased educational disparities. Nationally, increased threats of violence and harm against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders resulted in some students in these populations not returning to in-person learning.³⁴

The LEAP Task Force Report states that the work to accelerate student learning must be explicitly anti-racist and equity-focused. The RIDE application for ESSER III funding asks school districts to describe how their ESSER III plans prioritize the need of students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic including Students of Color.^{35,36}

Eight (22%) districts (Barrington, Central Falls, Cumberland, Newport, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, South Kingstown, and Westerly) designated a total of \$912,000 to equity audits or trainings on culturally responsive teaching, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

***Newport Public Schools** committed \$63,000 to provide professional development on **identifying and eliminating racial bias** and has set a goal of having all K-12 teachers receive formal professional development by the end of the 2023 school year. Newport is partnering with **Sankofa** to provide the implicit bias training.*

Students Experiencing Homelessness

Rhode Island received \$2.7 million in *American Rescue Plan Act* Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) program funds. Consistent with the *McKinney-Vento Act*, the funding will be used to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness and provide wraparound services to enable youth experiencing homeless to participate fully in school activities.³⁷ Funds provided through ARP-HCY are not included in this analysis.

In Rhode Island in 2021, 15% of homeless students met expectations on the third grade *RICAS* English language arts assessment compared to 40% of non-homeless students, and less than 5% of homeless students met expectations on the third grade mathematics assessment compared to 25% of non-homeless students.³⁸ Two districts (North Kingstown and Smithfield) designated a total of \$9,220 to programs or services explicitly designed for students experiencing homelessness.

***Smithfield Public Schools** allocated \$2,000 to fund the role of the **Family Liaison**, a school psychologist that supports students and families deemed at-risk due to homelessness, mental health concerns, behavioral concerns to maximize participation in summer programming and other wraparound services. The district also designated \$2,220 so students experiencing homelessness can participate in the **YMCA Summer Impact** instructional program.*

Students in Foster Care

Students in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in the country and are more likely to fall behind in school, have lower graduation rates, experience higher levels of residential and school instability, and have lower test scores than their peers. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted important educational supports and many experienced increased placement instability, isolation, uncertainty and anxiety due to the disruptions to normal routines and visitation with family.³⁹

The RIDE application for ESSER III funding asks school districts to describe how their ESSER III plan prioritizes the need of students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic including students in foster care.⁴⁰ **No districts designated ESSER III funds to programs or services explicitly designed for students in foster care.**

LGBTQ+ Youth

Schools can be a critical source of services and supports for many LGBTQ+ students, including mental health services. National research suggests school closures and restricted access to gender and sexuality alliances (GSAs) and other affirming student organizations, supportive teachers, coaches, counselors, and peers disparately impacted LGBTQ+ students. Decreased access to needed services and supports may have heightened pre-existing risks for students who are struggling

with their identity or enduring rejection from family or friends.⁴¹ Two districts (Johnston and Pawtucket) included investments to support LGBTQ+ students.

Johnston will partner with Tri-County Community Health to provide resources for LGBTQ awareness, substance use, and social media safety.

Pawtucket has allocated \$1.2 million for contracts to provide mental health services to students and professional development focused on mental health and gender sensitivity to staff.

Please visit the [ESSER Community Toolkit](#) to learn more about ESSER funds and to access resources to help engage students, families, and community members in ESSER planning.

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Appendix: ESSER III plans of the 36 traditional public school districts in Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	Chronic Absenteeism	Literacy	Math	Intervention Targeted Supports	Mental & Behavioral Health/ Social-Emotional Learning	Out-of-School Time	Community-Based Orgs	Family Engagement	MLLs	Students with IEPs	Students of Color	Homeless Students	LGBTQ+ Youth	Students in Foster Care
Barrington		X	X	X		X					X			
Bristol Warren		X		X	X			X	X					
Burrillville		X	X		X	X		X		X				
Central Falls		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Chariho		X	X	X	X	X								
Coventry		X	X	X		X	X		X	X				
Cranston		X		X	X	X			X					
Cumberland		X	X		X				X	X	X			
East Greenwich			X	X	X									
East Providence		X	X		X	X				X				
Exeter-West Greenwich		X	X	X	X					X				
Foster		X	X							X				
Foster-Glocester			X	X										
Glocester		X	X		X	X				X				
Jamestown		X	X		X	X	X			X				
Johnston	X		X	X	X	X				X			X	
Lincoln		X	X		X	X	X							
Little Compton		X			X	X	X							
Middletown		X		X	X			X	X	X				
Narragansett		X	X			X								
New Shoreham		X			X	X			X					
Newport	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
North Kingstown		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		

North Providence					X	X			X					
North Smithfield		X	X	X	X	X			X					
Pawtucket		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Portsmouth		X	X		X					X				
Providence		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Scituate		X	X	X	X	X	X							
Smithfield		X	X			X	X	X	X			X		
South Kingstown		X	X		X	X	X				X			
Tiverton		X	X		X					X				
Warwick		X	X		X	X	X	X						
West Warwick					X	X				X				
Westerly			X		X	X	X	X		X	X			
Woonsocket		X	X	X	X	X			X	X				