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New Mexico to receive $979M in federal school aid; 90% to be distributed to districts, schools

Funding to of set learning loss, improve school safety

SANTA FE — New Mexico will receive $979 million in new federal aid for education, with 90% to be allocated by the Public Education Department to individual school districts and state charter schools to help safely reopen schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students.

Of the remaining 10%, half ($48.9 million) will be earmarked for evidence-based interventions to address learning loss; 1% ($9.8 million) will be used for evidence-based summer-enrichment programs; and 1% ($9.8 million) will go toward evidence-based comprehensive after-school programs.

After those earmarks, the Public Education Department will spend the nearly $30 million remaining on previously established priorities including accelerated instruction, closing the digital divide and supporting students with disabilities and students at-risk.

The funding, which covers a 2 ½-year period, is available through the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund established by Congress on March 11. The legislation provides nearly $122 billion for states and schools nationwide through September 2023.

The funds will be available to states later this month, the U.S. Department of Education announced Wednesday. The Public Education Department will distribute 90% of the total to school districts and state charter schools through the same process as Title 1 allocations. Districts and state charter schools should receive the funding no later than July 1.

“This new round of federal support for our schools is a critical investment and comes at an ideal time as New Mexico safely reopens all our K-12 schools,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “This funding will support the very evidence-based initiatives New Mexico has already targeted to help our schools and our students recover from the COVID-19 pandemic between now and September 2023.”

Districts and state charter schools must use 20 percent of their share of the new funds to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions that also respond to students’ social, emotional and academic needs. Those interventions also must address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on historically underserved student subgroups, including Native American students, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness and children and youth in foster care.

What remains of district/charter school funding after that may be used for a wide range of activities to address needs rising from the pandemic, with a special emphasis on implementing public health protocols that align with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This is the third round of federal pandemic aid for public schools. The $2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided about $130 million to New Mexico for K-12 education last spring. That was followed by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), which sent $435 million to New Mexico for K-12 education after it became law in late December.

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