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State Coronavirus Relief Funds to Address K-12 Education Challenges

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Missouri will use $55 million from the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund to expand educational opportunities for students and address two key challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for K-12 education: student internet connectivity and potential learning loss during extended school closures.

While school buildings were closed this spring, one in five Missouri students could not access online learning opportunities due to Wi-Fi availability and/or affordability On July 2, the Department of Economic Development announced it had allocated $10 million of the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to reimburse schools for costs associated with increasing student connectivity and expanding campus Wi-Fi networks for the coming school year. It is estimated that these funds will allow 250,000 new concurrent connections to the internet for students.

DESE will then use nearly $20 million allocated to the agency through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund and the Elementary and Secondary Schools Education Relief Fund state reserve to support schools in providing additional student devices. Applications and the necessary documentation schools will be required to submit to collect this reimbursement will be forthcoming.

DESE will receive an additional $10 million of the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund to create a formative assessment tool to gauge the level of learning loss – or growth – students experienced this spring. These funds will also be used to develop strategies to accelerate learning to help students who may have fallen behind get back on track quickly. These short, turnkey assessments will not be used for accountability, but rather as a valuable tool educators can use when students return to school in August to inform instruction and assemble the supports a student may need, with results returned to schools in just one week.

The state is also allocating $7.5 million of the Coronavirus Relief Fund to reimburse schools for transportation expenses incurred when delivering meals to students during school closures. Missouri families counted on this assistance, with schools serving over 19 million meals through the pandemic.

An additional $7.5 million of the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund has been allocated to help schools cover the costs of personal protective equipment and cleaning and medical supplies for schools and buses, as part of a cost-share program with local counties. Just over $795,000 has also been allocated to reimburse those schools that provided childcare for emergency workers during school closures.

Contact Information

Communications
Phone
573-751-3469
Communications@dese.mo.gov

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO
65102-0480

Contact Us
Main Line: 573-751-4212
Educator Certification: 573-751-0051

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