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Gov. Wolf Announces Nearly $5 Billion in Federal COVID-19 Relief for Pre-K-12 Schools

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Education, Press Release, Public Health

Governor Tom Wolf today announced that Pennsylvania is expected to receive $4.9 billion in federal relief funds to help Pre-K to 12 schools return students to classroom learning and equitably expand opportunity for students who need it most.

The funding, and the state's nearly complete special initiative to provide teachers, school staff and contractors the opportunity to get the voluntary, single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, supports the governor's goal to help more schools to reopen and for additional students and teachers to safety return to the classroom.

"All schools have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and I commend school communities for rising to the challenge to combat the toll it has taken," said Gov. Wolf. "This extra funding is critical to help schools meet the unique needs of educating students at this time while keeping school buildings safe when students return to the classroom."

The funding is provided by the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund passed by Congress and signed by President Biden.

"Our school communities need these additional resources to invest in instructional materials, equipment, facilities, transportation and more, and we are pleased to make these funds available to them," said Acting Secretary Noe Ortega. "These funds will provide more assistance to school communities as we continue to navigate the pandemic."

At least 90 percent, or $4.5 billion, of the funds will flow to traditional public school districts and charter schools. Each entity will receive an amount proportional to the federal Title I-A funds received in 2020 under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The school districts and charter schools must use at least 20 percent of this money to address learning loss and the social, emotional, and academic needs of underrepresented students, including students from low-income families, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

Schools can use the rest of the funding for a wide range of activities, including food service; professional training; technology purchases; sanitization and cleaning supplies; summer and after-school programs; and mental health supports.

A list of ESSER III fund allocations is available on PDE's website.

Funds must be used by September 2024. School districts and charter schools must apply to PDE to obtain their allocated funds. The application process will be posted on the PDE website in the coming days. Under the American Rescue Act of 2021, PDE will use the remaining $500 million of ESSER funding for interventions that address learning loss, support summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool programs, and assist schools that do not receive a direct ESSER allocation such as career and technical schools and intermediate units.