

Using COVID-19 Relief Funds  
to Support Student Learning  
*and other resources*

**Michele Neely, President, State Charter Schools Foundation**

# Federal Funding Breakdown



## **COVID-19 relief funds were given to LEAs in addition to Title funds.**

- CARES Act or ESSER I
  - Spend by September 30, 2022
- CRRSA Act or ESSER II
  - Spend by September 30, 2023
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) or ESSER III (largest award)
  - Spend by September 30, 2024
  - **At least 20% must be used to address the impact of lost instructional time.**
- Awards were determined based on Title grant formulas (data typically from 1-2 years prior).
- [See awards for every district in the country.](#)

Funds must be *encumbered* by these dates. For details on managing federal grants, see the [SCSF's Tips & Tricks presentation.](#)

# Federal Funding Breakdown



**There are few restrictions on using ESSER funds.**

Examples of acceptable use include academic acceleration, technology, mental health, after-school programs, facility upgrades to allow for safe in-person instruction, etc. BUT these funds have an expiration date and likely will *not* come again. Priority should be given to your most vulnerable students, and you must ensure equity.

Construction is strongly discouraged because of the complexity of spending funds by the deadline.

Funds are best-suited for one-time expenses or limited programs since they will not continue.

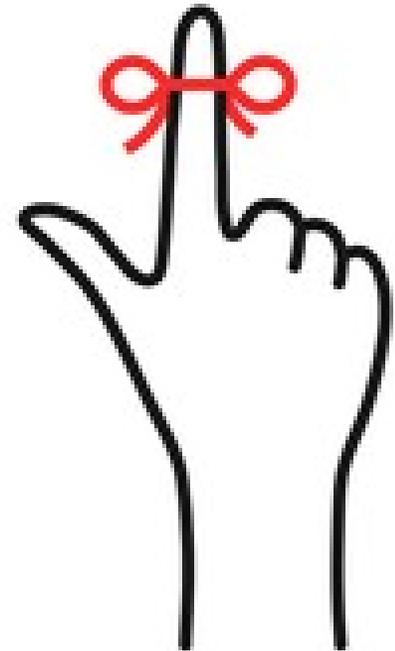
Consider the implications of documenting expenditures & inventory.

For GaDOE guidance, presentations, documents, and contacts, visit the [Georgia Insights ESSER Funding website](#) and the [Whole Child Toolkit](#).

# Federal Fund Management

## There are strings attached.

- Funds must be budgeted before they are spent. Follow the GaDOE and internal budget approval process.
- Find [evidence](#) to support interventions (keep documentation).
- You will have to report on how you spent the funds.
- You may be required to complete a Single Audit.
- Consider the amount of effort required to document an expenditure related to the benefit and cost.
- **Don't forget – you must have and adhere to your federal programs policies and procedures. Refer to the [Federal Programs Handbook](#).**



# Federal Funding Breakdown



## Small group tutoring example

Your school has identified 50 students who could benefit from supplemental instruction based on benchmark testing and teacher feedback. Your instructional lead decides to use *Building Blocks for Math* in small group tutoring sessions after school after locating [evidence](#) to support this intervention. Your budget includes funds to purchase the curriculum and to pay for five teachers to provide two one-hour sessions twice a week after school for nine weeks.

Curriculum & materials: \$2,500 total

Teachers:  $\$40/\text{hour} * 2 \text{ hours/week} * 9 \text{ weeks} * 5 \text{ teachers} = \$3,600$

**TOTAL: \$6,100**

# Federal Funding Breakdown

## Small group tutoring example

Is this a good fit with ESSER funding?

1. Does it meet a need? Is it allowable? Is it feasible?
2. What documentation is needed?

Is this intervention worth the time & effort to use federal funds, or could you use other funds? What is staff time to “manage” this expenditure worth?

### Curriculum

- Quote
- Payment requisition
- Purchase order & invoice
- Proof of purchase (check or electronic payment)
- Delivery receipt
- Inventory control (if part of policies and procedures)

### Teacher Payments

- List of students
- How they were selected (methodology) with back-up data
- Contracts with teachers
- Group rosters
- Timesheets for every session
- Student attendance sheet from each session
- Proof of payment, showing fed funds were used separate from regular salary
- Lessons from sessions
- Data showing results & further intervention



# Federal Funding Breakdown

## **Electronic Devices example**

Your school has been integrating more digital learning resources over the last two years and needs more tablet computers to use during the school day. This will enable students to access electronic textbooks and engage with a social emotional learning app. You would like to purchase 200 iPads.

iPads (educational discount, no tax, with management software):  $\$315/\text{each} * 200 = \$63,000$

Charging carts:  $\$500/\text{cart} * 8 \text{ carts} = \$4,000$

TOTAL:  $\$67,000$

# Federal Funding Breakdown

## Electronic devices example

Is this a good fit with ESSER funding?

1. Does it meet a need? Is it allowable? Is it feasible?
2. What documentation is needed?

Is this intervention worth the time & effort to use federal funds?

### iPads

- Three quotes (can use Amazon, Target, Staples, etc.) and rationale for selecting iPads
- Payment requisition
- Purchase order & invoice
- Proof of purchase (check or electronic payment)
- Delivery receipt
- Inventory control (pilferable items)

### Charging Carts

- Three quotes (can use Amazon, Target, Staples, etc.) and rationale for selecting these carts
- Payment requisition
- Purchase order & invoice
- Proof of purchase (check or electronic payment)
- Delivery receipt
- Inventory control if in policy

# Federal Fund Management



Always refer back to your school's Federal Programs policies and procedures. Establish processes and procedures that are followed every single time, without delay.

Consider staff time and effort when thinking about federal fund expenditures. How can your school best maximize the funds? Ensure that your financial services provider, bookkeeper, office manager, and federal programs contact are communicating. Mis-coded expenditures can affect your DE046 transmission, CPF score, and ability to receive federal funds. You may have to re-pay grant funds if not accounted for correctly.

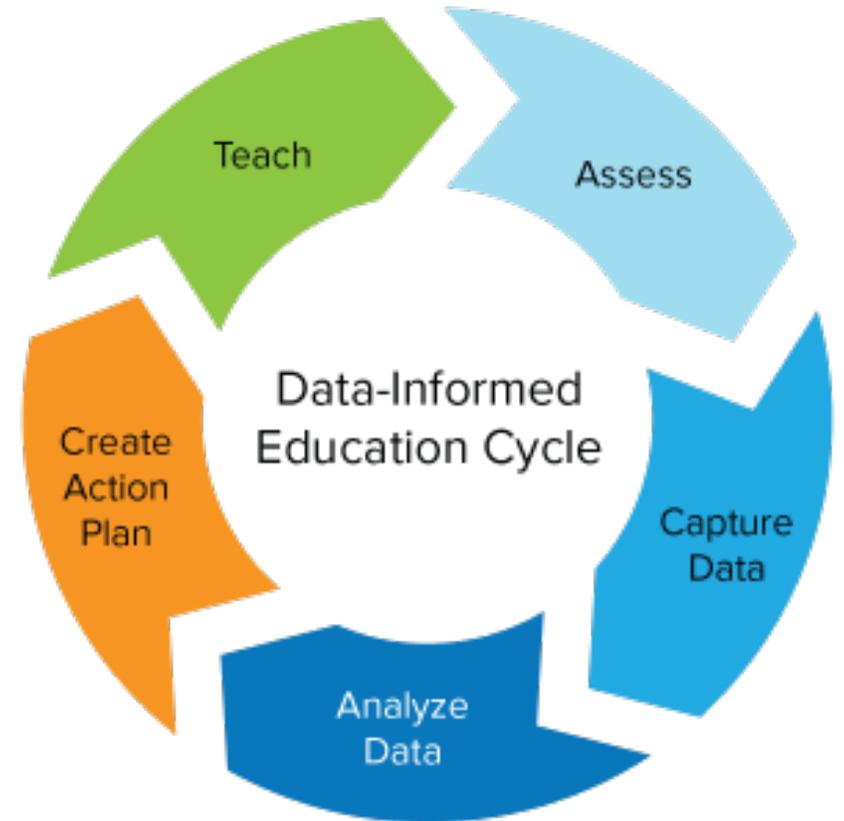
Use procurement partners like Buy-Q (charter school buying club) who can help you find pre-negotiated prices and reputable vendors. You can usually "piggy-back" off of an existing state or local government contract to get better rates.

\*Do not assume that the state contract is the best rate. (It usually isn't.)\*

# What do students need?

**You need data & information to know where to focus efforts.**

- Look at the collected assessment data:
  - Georgia Milestones
  - Benchmark assessments conducted at your school
- Fill in the gaps:
  - Teachers & tutors
  - Parents & students
- Get help:
  - UGA's [K-12 Assessment Solutions](#) (formerly Georgia Center for Assessment)
  - GaDOE's [Georgia Student Assessment Program](#)



# What do you know?

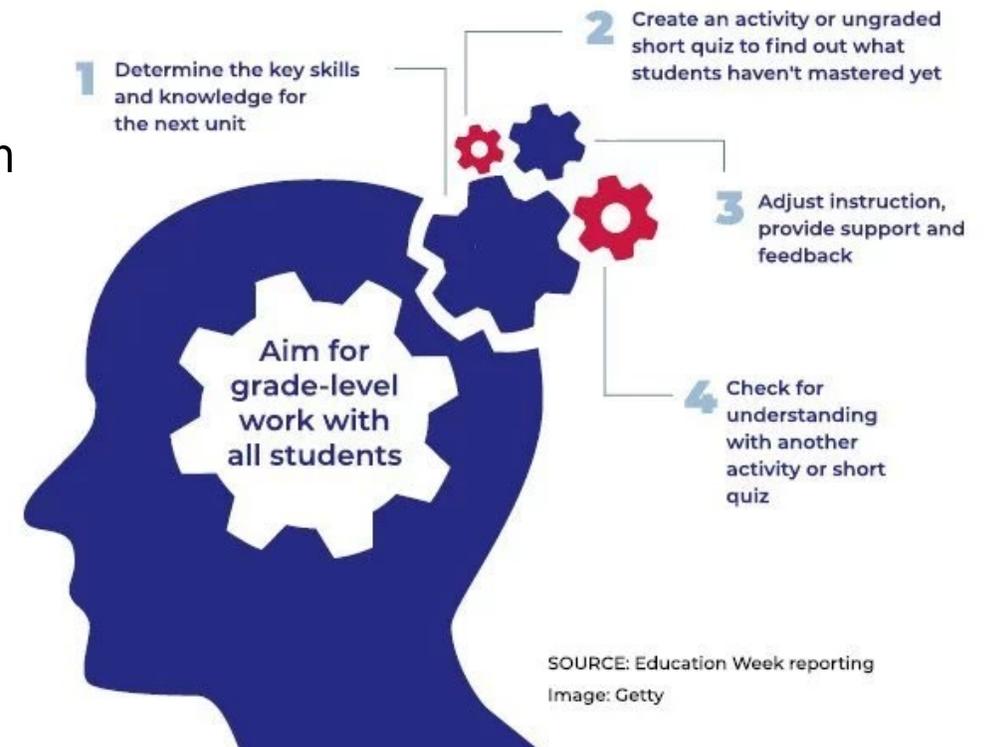
## This year's data probably looks different.

- Many students did not participate in Georgia Milestones.
- Your school probably already has a “Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)” process to identify and help students. (GaDOE offers [resources](#).)
- Encourage teachers to talk to each other to share info about material covered last year.

*How can you compensate for a lack of traditional data?*

*Rely more on “formative” and informal assessments.*

## Informal Assessments Are Pivotal For Student Success



# Strategies to Support Learning



**New & expanded strategies are needed to help students be successful.**

High-dosage [tutoring](#)

- Individual or small group
- In-person or online
- Your teachers or private company

Tutoring best practices

- Try to schedule during the school day.
- Ensure that families have devices & Internet if remote.
- Use incentives to encourage attendance & participation.
- Align with curriculum & work with teachers.
- Communicate with parents.

High-dosage tutoring – 3 or more sessions a week – is up to 20x more effective than meeting once a week.

# Strategies to Support Learning



**Tutoring is one of the most effective means of supplemental support.**

Other tutoring considerations

- Include family outreach and ensure close communication with tutors/vendor.
- Consider a [“pay for performance” contract](#) with a tutoring vendor.
- Integrate tutoring with an after-school program, using in-house programs or community partners.
- Make a plan for students with disabilities, EL learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students with transportation challenges.
- Beware of “service” organizations that offer free tutoring. Many are religious organizations that may have an agenda and/or do not have qualified tutors.
- See the [SCSF’s resources for tutoring](#).

# Strategies to Support Learning



## **Accelerate, don't remediate.**

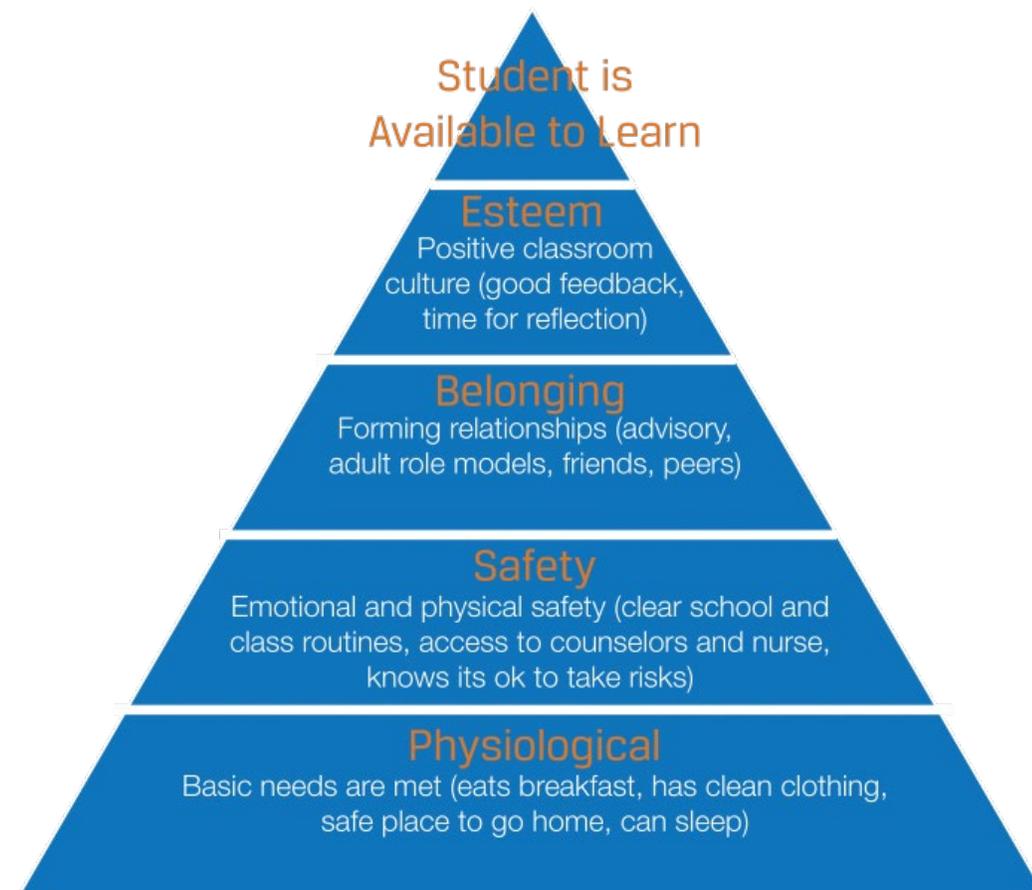
- Use new research and approaches to accelerate learning for students instead of remediating. (Teachers catch students up on concepts as they need them.)
- Find community partners who might be providing enrichment and learning programs.
- Consider longer school days, shorter breaks, or other ways to increase instructional time.
- Integrate the electronic and blended learning approaches that worked in a more permanent way.
- Are there physical barriers to learning you can address? Give students all the tools they need to be successful.

# Strategies to Support Learning



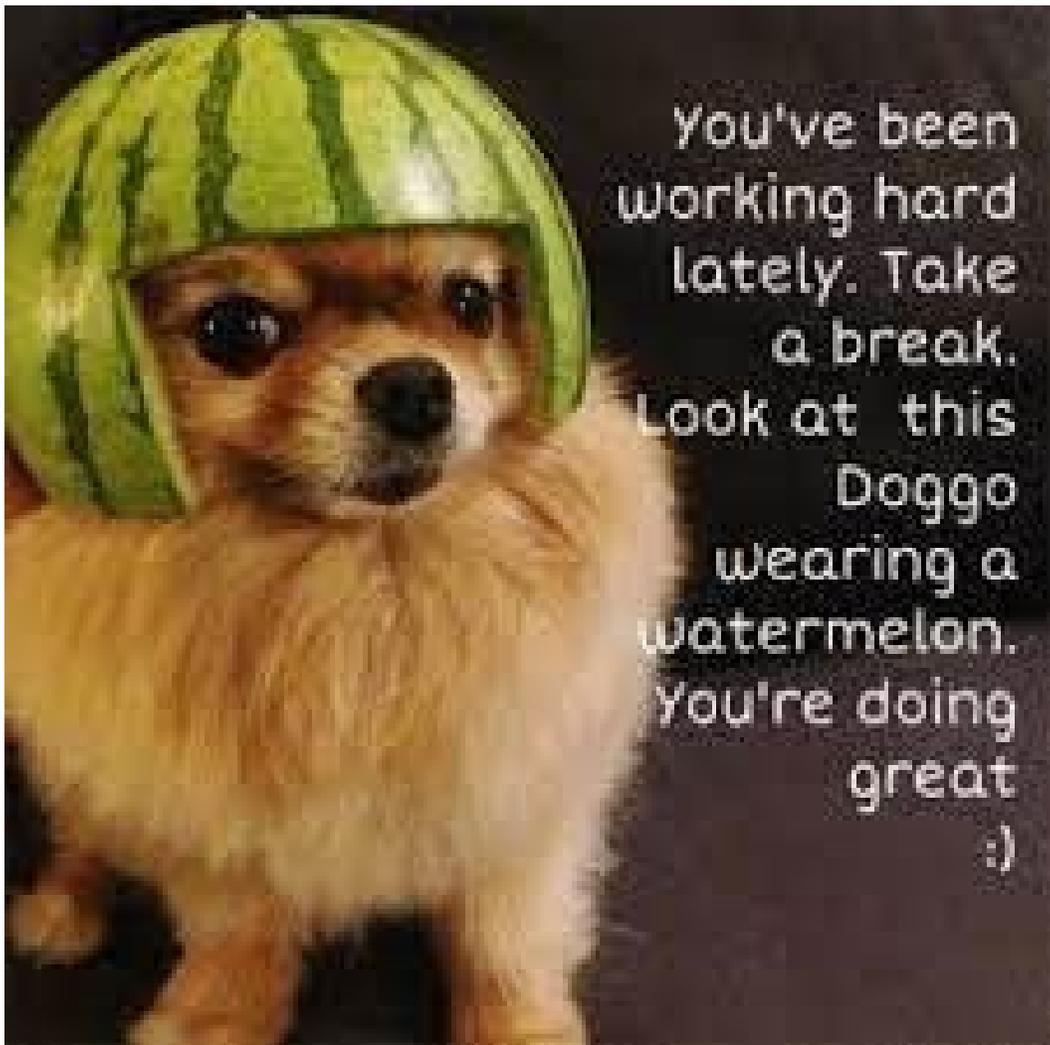
## Don't forget student wellbeing.

- Children may look okay, but many are probably struggling. Invest in your counselors and related programs.
- Consider measuring student (and staff) wellbeing in more meaningful ways with frequent surveys and opportunities for engagement like [Panorama](#) or [givethx](#).
- Think about a [new kind of food pantry](#) with clothes that kids want and food families enjoy.



Source: <https://www.positivetomorrows.org/maslows-hierarchy-of-school-needs/>

# Puppy Break





# Reality Check

**Your school has probably never been so popular. The vendors are lurking.**

- Vendors who send unsolicited emails are probably not your best choices. Seek out what you need, and ask other schools for referrals.
- All the guidance is saying the same thing but not telling you how to do it.
- Start by checking in with your school community. Use the data you have, and then engage in meaningful conversations. **Stop and listen.**
- Set your priorities based on your school community's needs.
- Are there deferred needs that you can address now? Can you invest more in your unique educational approach?
- How can you support your teachers and staff?

# SCSF Resources



**The SCSF is constantly compiling resources for you.**

- Documents and resources are waiting for you in a shared [Google Folder](#).
- The SCSF maintains a [list of grants for schools](#) so that you can look for alternate funding or ongoing funding after federal grants are depleted.
- A new focus on student and teacher/staff wellbeing has been launched with a goal of providing access to remote mental health services, mindfulness resources, and student and teacher/staff wellness spaces in schools.
- The SCSF's literacy initiative includes book vending machines for elementary schools to support reading and PBIS.

# Now it's your turn

**What is working for your school? What are you planning? What do you need?**

TEACHERS WHO ARE  
*tired, worn out,*  
AND UTTERLY EXHAUSTED  
*are most likely*  
MAKING A BIGGER  
*difference*  
THAN THEY WILL  
*ever know.*

# We are here for state charter schools!



STATE  
CHARTER  
SCHOOLS  
FOUNDATION  
*of Georgia*

scsfga.org  
@SCSFofGA

Michele Neely, President – mneely@scsfga.org – 404-615-5925