



EVERY TEXAN

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Every Texan Recommendations to the Texas Education Agency on the ESSR III State Plan

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The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSR III) provides over \$12 billion to Texas for public education. For the U.S. Department of Education to release the full funds to our schools, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) must first develop plans for the use of approximately \$1 billion in state-discretionary funds. Every Texan encourages the TEA to develop a plan that provides districts flexibility to address the social and emotional health of students and educators while implementing accelerated learning measures.

Flexibility

There are over 1,200 public school and charter districts across the state of Texas. How schools responded to the pandemic varied, and what schools need to recover will vary as well. Schools are also dealing with high levels of uncertainty as they plan their budget and have concerns that complex rules and reporting requirements will hamper innovation.

The TEA plan should:

- avoid “one-size fits all” models that do not work for all districts.
- avoid unnecessary complexity that makes it harder to plan and implement services.
- ensure that compliance is simple and understandable.

Social and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The global pandemic is a traumatic event that has impacted every Texan. Our communities have experienced loss of life, economic downturn, and social isolation. As our schools recover, addressing the mental health of students is equally as important as restoring academic rigor.

The TEA plan should:

- prioritize expanding access to mental health professionals and crisis counselors in schools by allowing Education Service Centers to hire individuals who can be shared among multiple districts.
- create service repositories that connect students and families with local supports such as food pantries, health care services, and childcare.

Accelerated Education

Students across the state have experienced interruptions in their education. As a result, many students are falling below grade level requirements or need credit recovery to graduate on time. Students of color, emergent bilingual students, and students from families with limited incomes routinely experience inequities in the educational system. These inequities have been worsened by the pandemic. During this time, educators changed the way they taught with little to no training. Now, many schools are adopting hybrid models that can be challenging for even our most highly effective teachers.

The TEA plan should:

- place a greater emphasis on opportunities outside of school time available to students, including partnering with community-based organizations that provide enrichment activities that also support social and emotional learning.
- provide districts the time to determine what works best for the needs of their students.
- encourage smaller class sizes for accelerated learning, especially for bilingual education.
- prioritize professional development for educators.
- provide guidance on how to spend relief funds equitably and share best practices for supporting the unique needs of historically marginalized students.