

Philip Qualman

Superintendent
philip.qualman@eagleschools.net



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Eagle County Schools to receive \$1.7M in new relief funds

Colorado Department of Education released allocation amount of new Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds

Eagle, CO – Eagle County Schools announced today that it has been allocated \$1,713,773 in new Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to help address expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds come with strict usage guidelines subject to stringent state auditing. Included in the qualified expenses are programs to aid in helping students recover learning loss during the pandemic. The district plans to prioritize credit-recovery programs, summer school, and intervention programs to help address student learning deficiencies.

Across the nation, and in our local schools, many students are struggling to keep up with learning and grade level expectations. A significantly higher than normal percentage of students are recording D's and F's in subjects, indicating the need for more robust credit recovery and intervention programs than in a typical year.

“Students are incredibly resilient and capable of recovering from learning loss. As a matter of course, each new school year begins with assessments so that teachers know where to start with students,” said Superintendent Philip Qualman. “The pandemic has increased the volume of students falling behind, so the task is bigger than usual. These funds enable schools to develop more innovative ways to help students recover.”

District leadership, including principals and school-level admin teams, are working on programs that can be implemented immediately to help students who are behind. Though not finalized, considerations include recovery and intervention programs on Wednesdays and Saturdays, evening sessions, and summer school.

Priority focus will be on graduating seniors and juniors to ensure they have the credits necessary to graduate on time, though interventions will happen at all grade levels. Program details will be communicated directly to students and families who will benefit from the extra support.

“Recovery requires extra work from students, so it’s important for parents to help their children connect with educational opportunities and efforts to ensure their future success,” Qualman added. “When students take ownership and responsibility for their learning as an effort that ultimately benefits them personally, they tend to have more drive and self-motivation.”

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The new ESSER funds cannot be used as pay raises, staff bonuses, the addition of permanent full-time positions, or to supplement general funds. They can be used to cover extra-duty pay such as hours worked during summer school, nights, and weekends. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the school district has experienced an increase in costs related to adapting to the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. Both the first round of ESSER funds and this second round have been essential to keeping these costs from significantly impacting normal operational funds.