

Making the Most of School Resources as Federal Covid Funding Ends

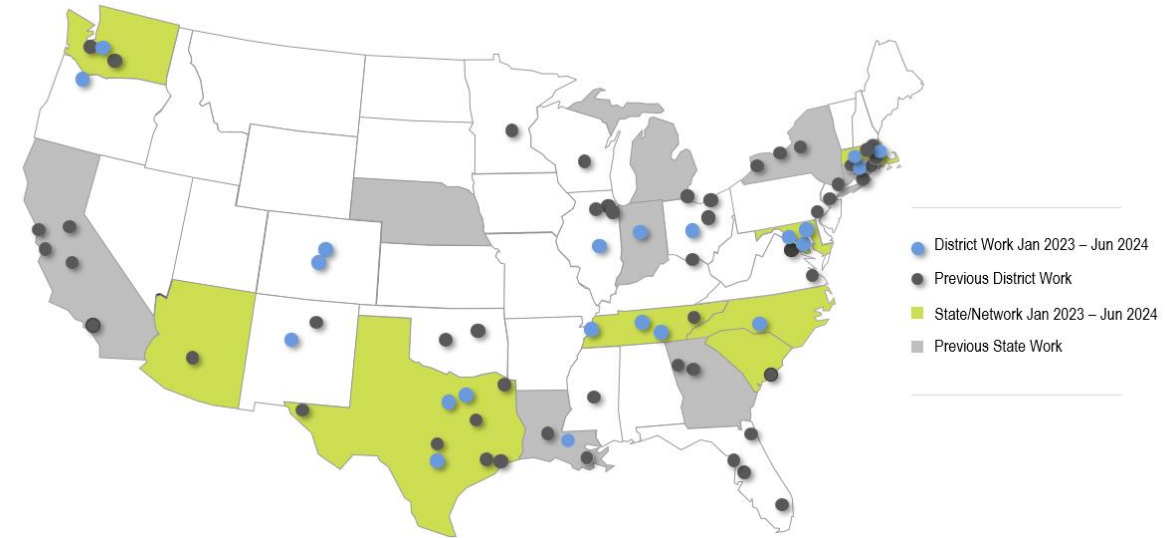
Education Resource Strategies
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February 22, 2024



About Education Resource Strategies

Education Resource Strategies (ERS) is a non-profit that empowers school system leaders to make transformative shifts in resources, structures, and practices so that all students—especially those with the greatest learning needs and those furthest from opportunity—attend a school where they can learn and thrive.

We partner with district teams, expand leaders' knowledge and skills, and share lessons and tools with the field.



Key Takeaways: a Crossroad



Centuries old ways of organizing and spending on schooling weren't working for all students before the pandemic



Pandemic disruption, coupled with federal recovery funding (ESSER), **accelerated important investments and openness** to ways of doing school



Unprecedented financial stress caused by loss of federal funds, continued student need, enrollment decline, and pressure on compensation **creates a STARK CHOICE**



Take a "hunker down" approach that cuts away at an already outmoded model of schooling and **loses the important new areas of investment**

Empower district and school leaders to **redesign** schooling and **enable** tough choices and trade-offs





Funding provided states and districts \$190B in additional funds allocated based on students living in poverty

FEDERAL LANGUAGE

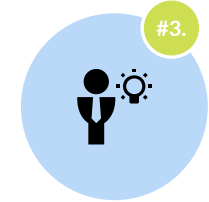
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds are provided to State educational agencies and school districts to help safely **reopen** and sustain the **safe operation** of schools and address the **impact of the coronavirus pandemic** on the Nation's students



Keep classrooms **open** and **safe** for students and teachers during this global pandemic.



Expand access to existing services and bring an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to **recover** from disrupted learning and kick-start accelerated learning.



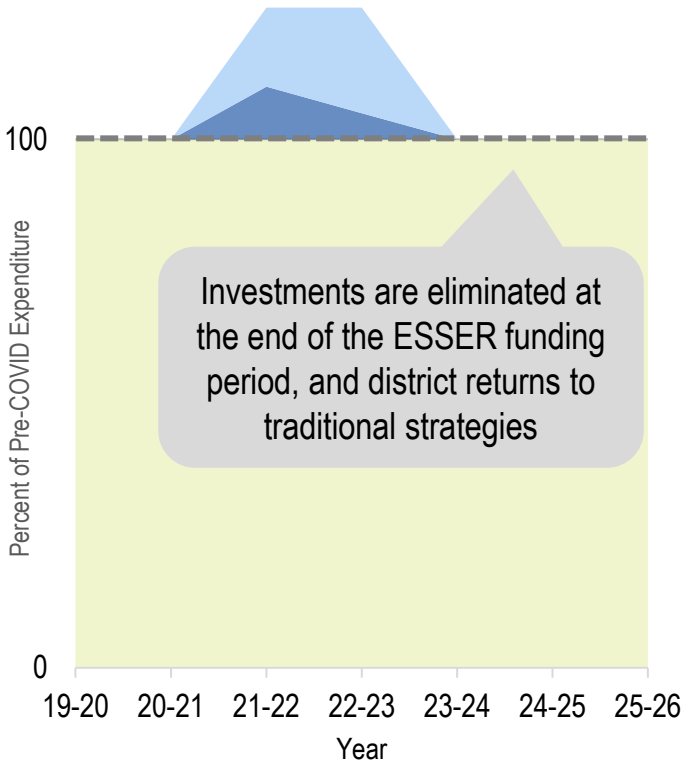
Lay the groundwork for long-term **redesign** of instruction and underlying cost structures to address heightened student need.

Source: US DOE's [Summary of ESSER](#) and [FAQs](#)

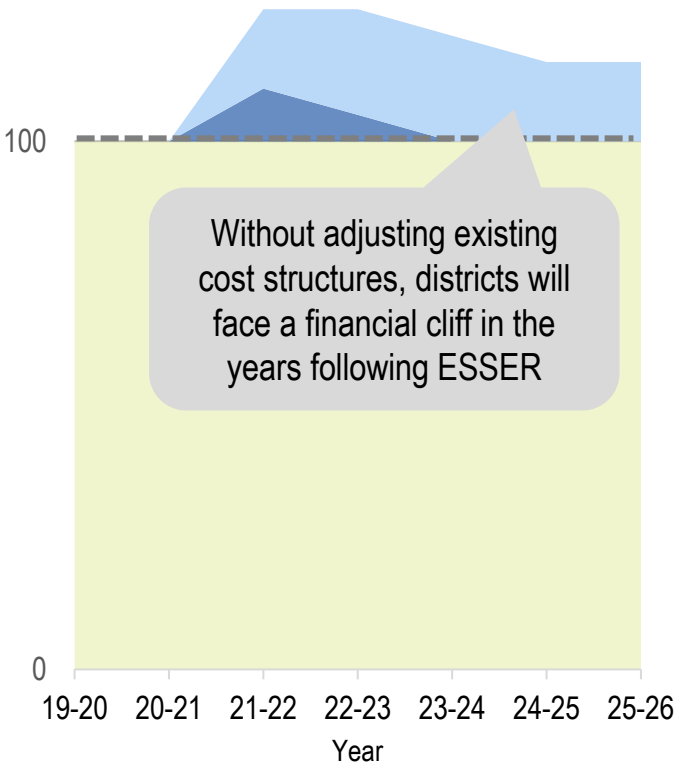
Depending on how districts used ESSER funds, some will face both service delivery and financial sustainability challenges

Illustrative

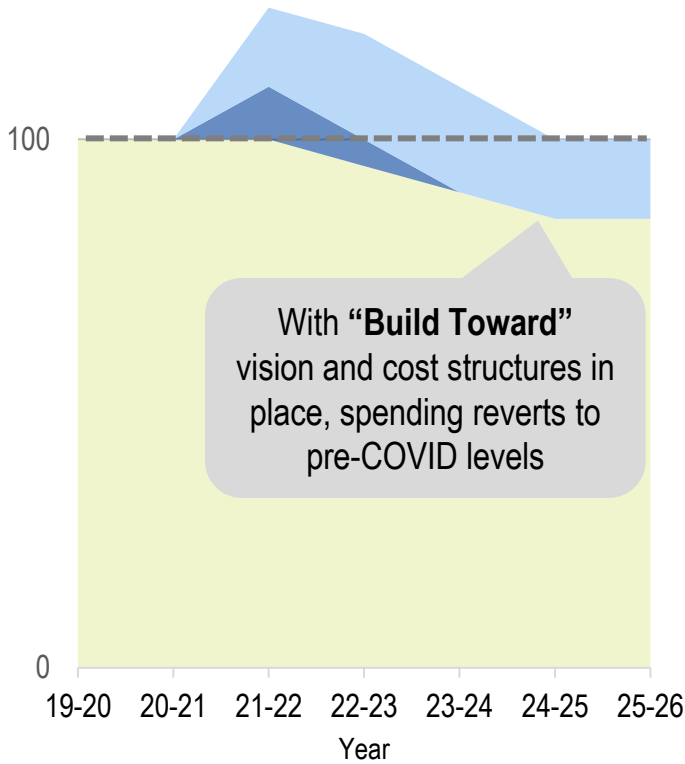
Scenario 1: Ramp up redesign and then ramp down once the funding period ends, getting back to baseline in FY25



Scenario 2: Ramp up redesign, ramp down some programs without making tradeoffs betting on additional funding



Scenario 3: Use a three-year runway to implement a “do now, build toward” approach



■ Current Strategies
 ■ Redesign Strategies
 ■ Recovery Strategies

Some states and districts will face a steeper cliff as ESSER funds come to an end

- ESSER funds account for anywhere between 4%-17% of total education revenue in states if spread over 3 years
- States like Mississippi and Louisiana, where the vast majority of the state's districts serve students living in poverty, will be hit even harder



For example:

ESSER funds allocated evenly across three years account for 17% of Mississippi's education revenue. For Jackson Public Schools, its \$170M total ESSER allocation represents a 21% budget increase each year for three years that will end after September 2024.¹

¹ESSER data from US Department of Education; Baseline education revenue data from National Center for Education. Source: Education Resource Strategies [Here's Why Some States Are Facing a Steeper ESSER Funding Cliff in 2024](#)



**How did many districts approach
using ESSER funds?**

Nationally, many districts used ESSER funds to add new practices **ON TOP** of traditional ways of organizing

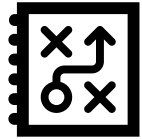
Many district leaders took this approach in response to pressing challenges:

- **Rapid timeline** combined with **pressure to spend** stimulus **quickly**
- **Need to focus on the immediate and urgent**, without time or staff to work on long-term planning
- **Lack of strong processes** to determine how best to invest these funds or track the impact of these investments
- Historic premium on spending new dollars on **staff positions and compensation increases**



**Despite these challenges, strategic districts
used ESSER funds to accelerate recovery
and begin to transform service delivery**

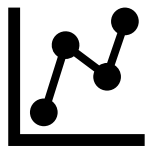
Strategic Approaches to Using ESSER Funds



Defined and aligned district strategy and ESSER investment plans



Made investments in proven, high-impact strategies



Used implementation metrics and leading indicators to evaluate progress



Applied a **Do Now, Build Toward** approach to sustain transformation

Districts used these principles to invest in “power strategies” that accelerated system redesign

1	Empowering Adaptable Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expansion of available curriculum materials• More time and longer blocks for team and individual planning and learning• Technology-enabled expert support for teachers
2	Time & Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explosion of tutoring and homework support through outside partners• New ways to expand and vary time based on lesson and student need• More frequent small group instruction and individual support
3	Improving the Teaching Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widespread use of technology• Introduction of new instructional roles
4	Relationships & Social Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily schedules ensuring regular time for connection with students and families
5	Community & Family Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community partners deliver day care, acceleration & social-emotional support• Families engaged in supporting student learning

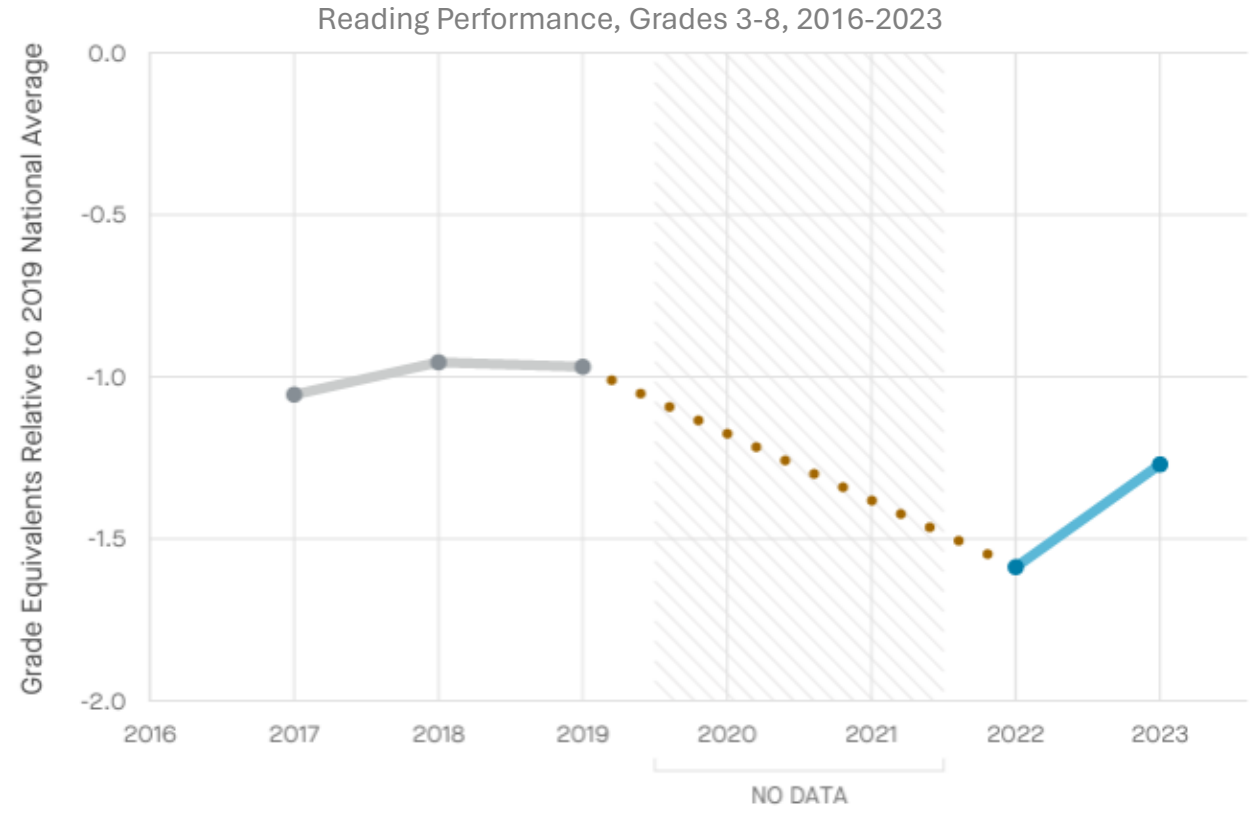


METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

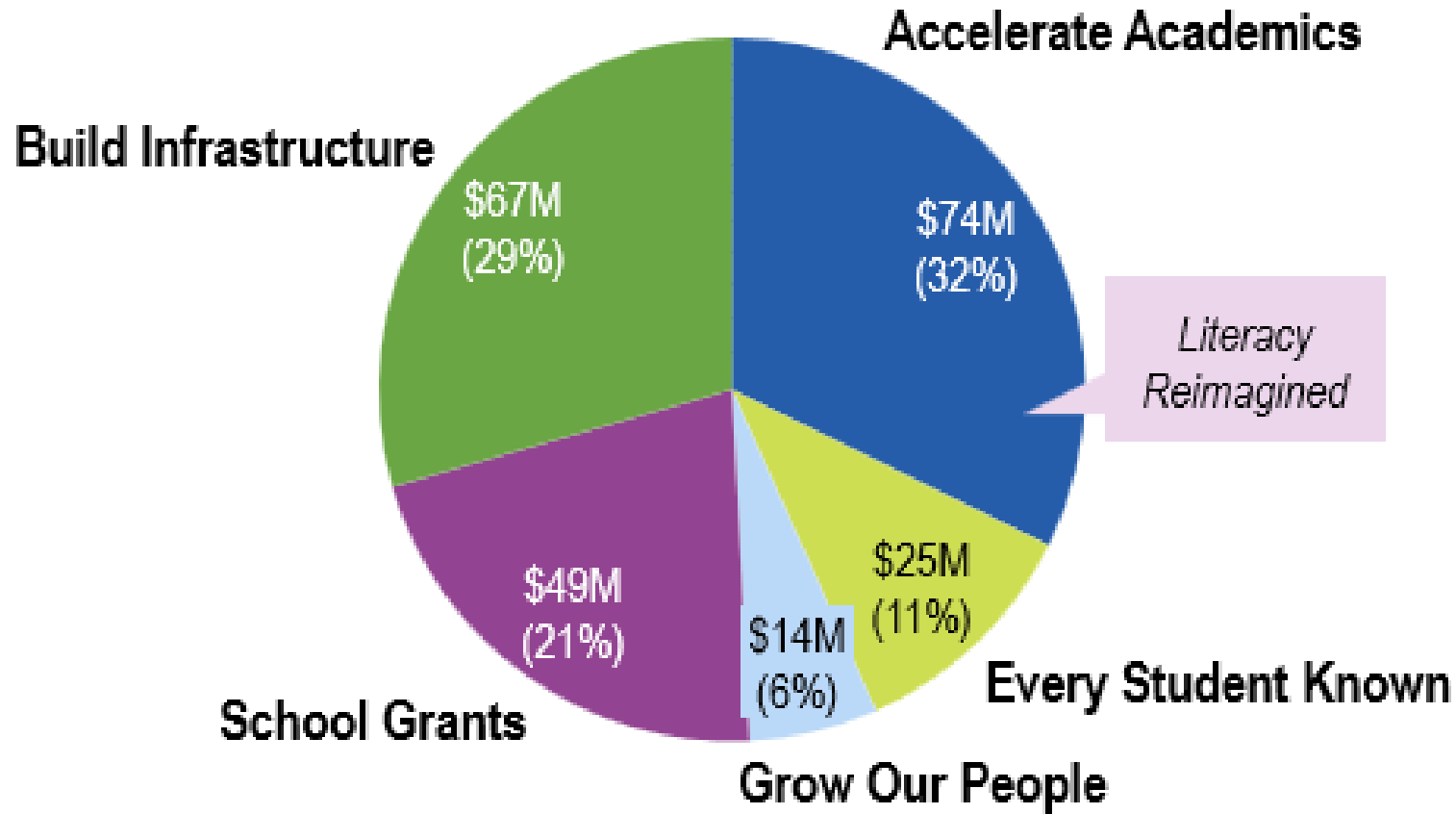


MNPS ranked 6th among the top 100 districts in growth from 2022 to 2023 in reading

- Pre-pandemic MNPS had identified **improved literacy outcomes** as a core focus of their strategic plan
- ESSR funds enabled acceleration of this work enabling investment in support for teachers with **strong instruction and adopting high-quality curriculum**



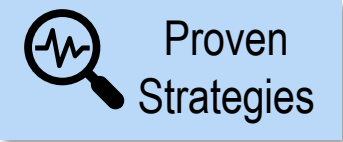
MNPS used ESSER funds to accelerate the implementation of its strategic plan



MNPS will sustaining impact post-ESSER by applying a “Do Now, Build Toward” approach

Investment	“Do Now” Actions	“Build Towards” Actions
<p>High Quality Curriculum & Instruction Materials</p>	<p>✓ \$32 million to buy and implement literacy curricula to use in all K-12 ELA classrooms respectively</p>	<p>➤ Established instructional leadership teams and built time into the school day for teams to engage in continuous improvement and feedback cycles</p>
<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>✓ \$10 Million on PD with teachers and instructional leaders</p>	<p>➤ Hired Director of Professional Learning to set a coordinated strategy for high-quality professional development</p>
<p>Instructional Coaches</p>	<p>✓ \$ 7 Million to hire instructional coaches to provide support during first year of implementation</p>	<p>➤ Executive directors and principals continue to engage in regular classroom observations</p>

MNPS has been deliberate in measuring and reporting progress on the way to outcomes



Investment	Implementation Metrics*	Leading Indicators
High Quality Curriculum & Instruction Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Teachers using new curriculum # Student hours logged in online programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panorama student survey results on student voice Observation data showing consistency of use of HQIM in classrooms Observation data showing consistent use of formative assessments and monitoring systems
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Teachers receiving training # PD days added 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation data showing fidelity to instructional best practices Survey responses of teachers and principals on roll-out of and fidelity to the new curriculum
Instructional Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of classroom observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation data showing improved classroom instructional practices Increased educator collaboration time

*Metrics are populated by ERS as suggested datapoints MNPS could consider in evaluating the progress of each investment.

Sources: Education Resource Strategies; [MNPS Literacy Reimagined Update](#); [MNPS News](#); [TN DOE](#)

Hartford Public Schools planned to invest ESSER funds in four Must Win areas aligned with strategy

1. Expand learning time and targeted support opportunities in and outside of the school day (Year 1: \$15.4M)

- A. **Extend learning time** through expanded summer school, intersession/Saturday opportunities, and evening school for high school
- B. **Deepen MTSS supports** through targeted group-size reductions and improved data systems

2. Increase support for teachers and school leaders (Year 1: \$11M)

- A. Adopt **high-quality curriculum** and materials
- B. Expand time and training for **teacher collaboration and professional learning**
- C. Expand coaching and supports for **teachers and school leaders**

3. Connect every student to an adult advocate and expand wellness supports (Year 1: \$7.6M)

- A. **Support student re-engagement** through a centralized re-engagement team and flexible school-based grants
- B. Fund capacity-building for **family & community partnerships**
- C. Expand the **Community School Model** to 11 total schools next year
- D. Increase access to **mental health services and spaces**

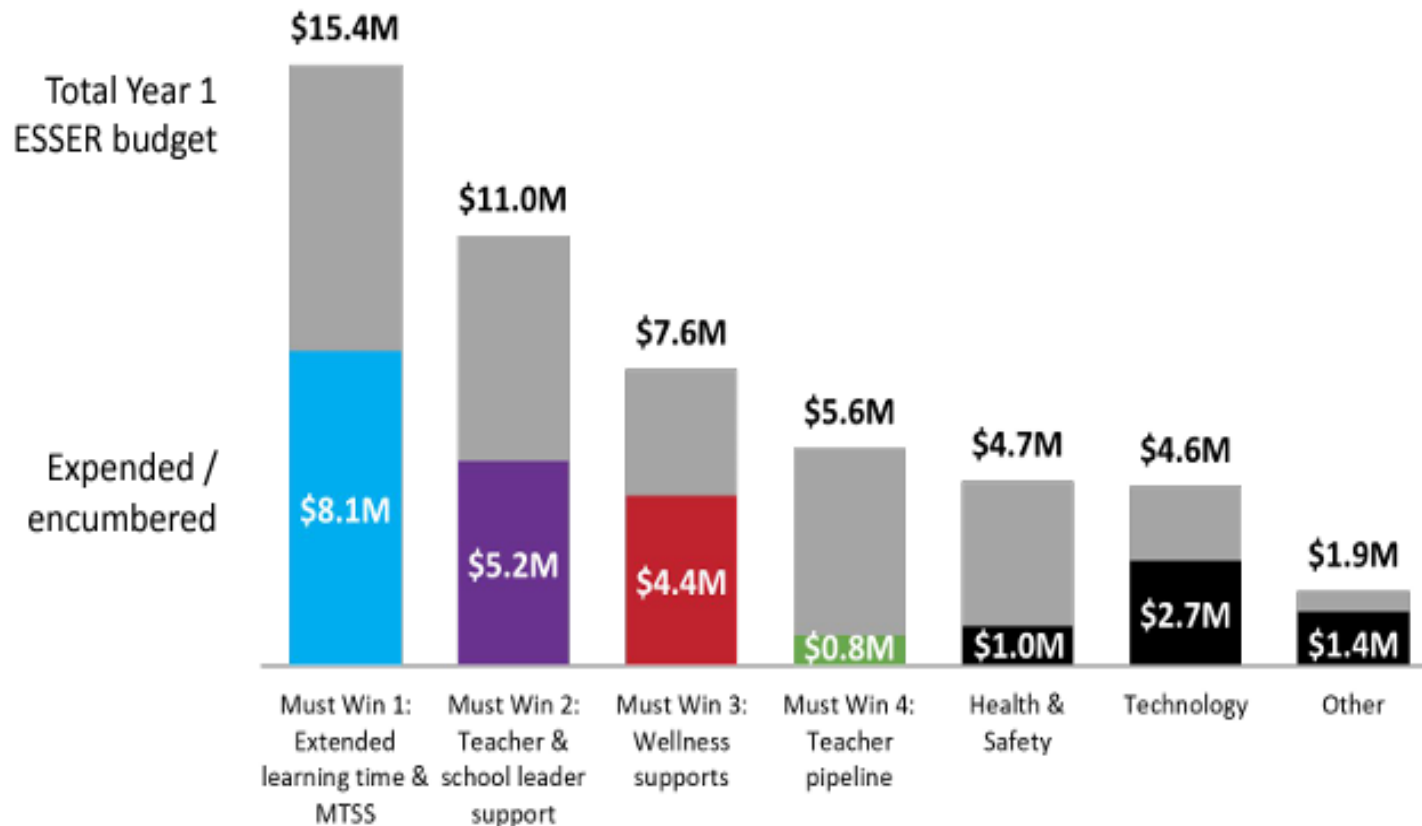
4. Cultivate a sustainable teacher pipeline (Year 1: \$5.6M)

- A. Create **hiring and retention incentives** to work in high-need schools and assignments
- B. Partner with higher ed and third party organizations to expand the **teacher pipeline**
- C. Increase capacity of **Office of Talent Management**

Equity Innovation Grants: Flexible funding for schools to expand/deepen successful practices at their schools (prioritizing neighborhood schools) (**\$0.5M** budgeted, **\$0.4M** total distributed to 22 schools)

But, like so many districts, experienced challenges in implementing those plans

ESSER II & III Actual Investments To Date
SY21-22



Significant Areas of Underspend

Personnel investments: 29% expended

- Lower spend in **recruitment / transfer / retention incentives**
- Challenges with hiring **resource teachers, teachers to reduce group size, coaches, and social workers**

Non-personnel investments: 59% expended

- **Technology**: Delays in logistics that have been resolved; and some purchases were funded through non-ESSER sources
- **Health & Safety**: School facilities equipment plans have changed; requirement less in safety supplies than intended

In response, leaders reevaluated implementation plans midway through the ESSER timeline



1. Increase **school-level agency for how to organize resources** to address their unique challenges and student needs



2. Increase **pay in strategic ways**, to address staffing shortages and compensation structures, particularly for teachers

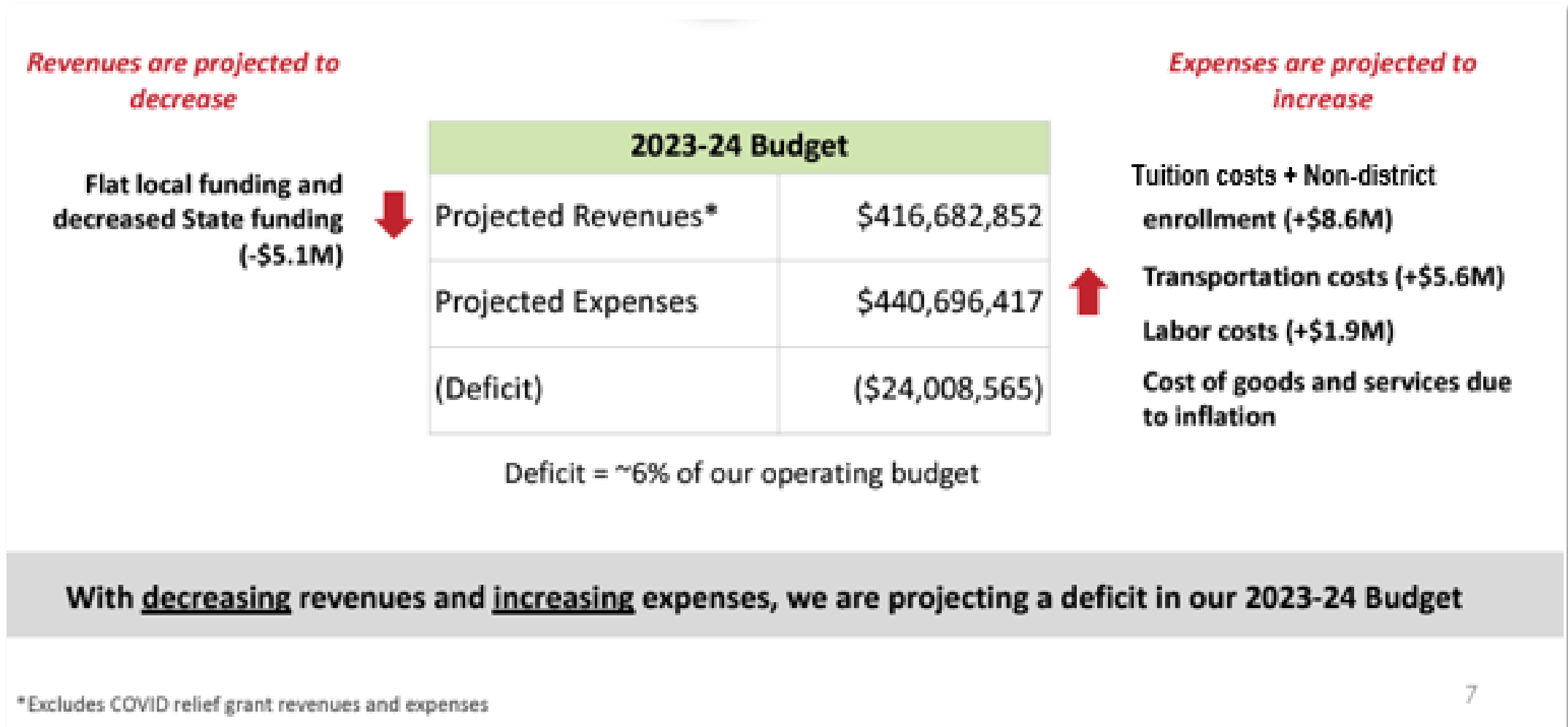


3. Target more resources toward **student recruitment and attendance** in highest impact areas of extended learning opportunities



4. Find ways to invest in **non-position resources** (like equipment, technology, infrastructure, etc.) in ways that can accelerate strategic plan priorities while buying down future spend to support long-term sustainability

Nonetheless, Hartford emerges from the ESSER timeline still facing deep financial and service delivery challenges



Districts with *high concentrations of poverty* will face unprecedented spending challenges

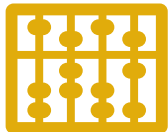
Based on an analysis of district data in Florida, Ohio, and Texas comparing **recurring spending** increases to **recurring revenue** increases between FY19 and FY23:



Without federal funding districts enter 2024 with deficit of 10-30% from their 2019 levels



Significant variation exists across and within states

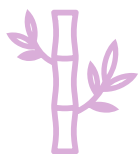


Districts with declining enrollment have the biggest gaps

Staffing decreases did not keep pace with enrollment decline and, in some cases, increased.



Teacher salaries have increased—but inflation outpaced the increase



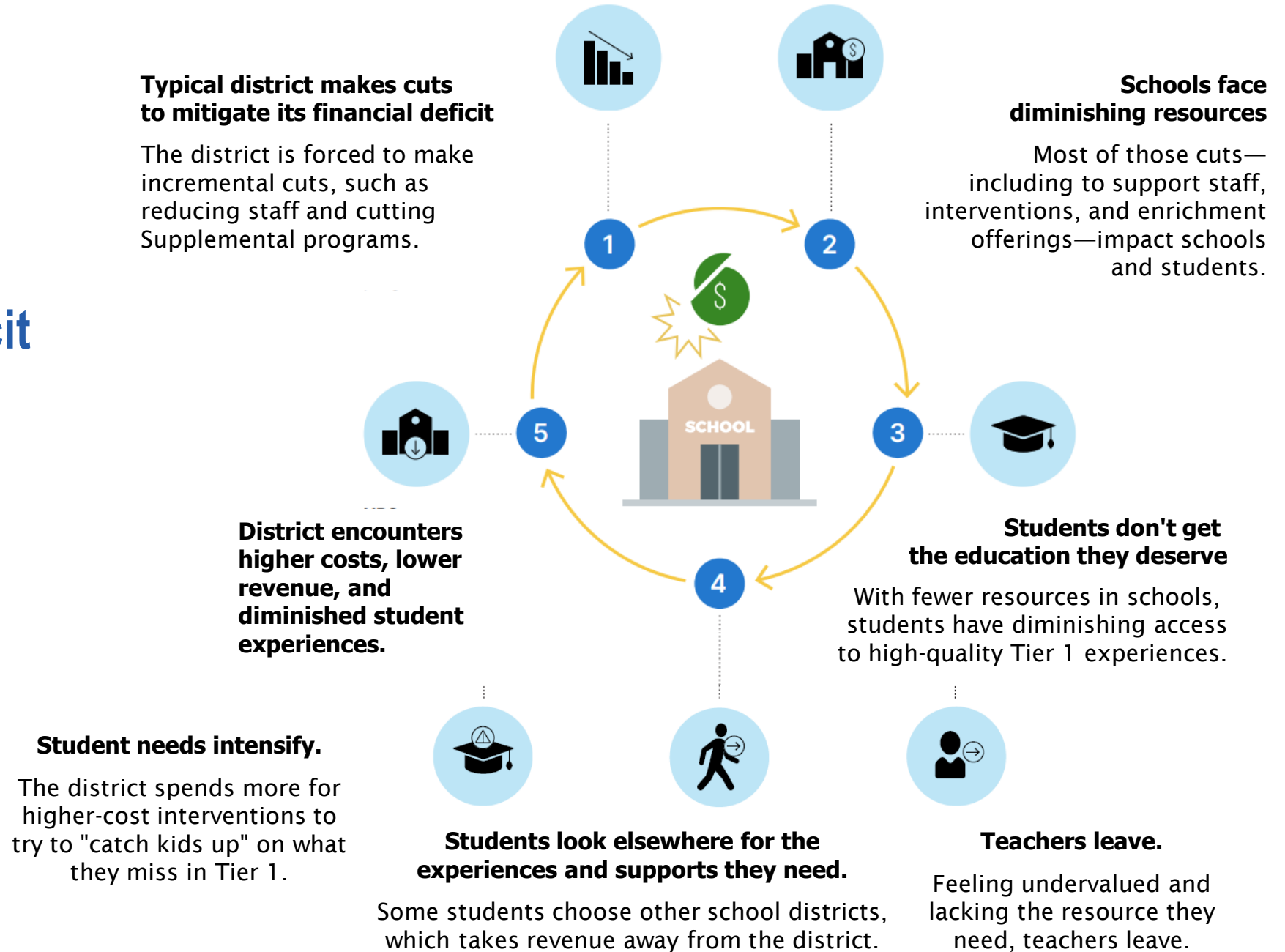
Though local spending did increase in many high poverty districts during this period, this spending **represents a small portion of spending** in most cases

Check out the ERS research brief that explores these challenges, available soon:

Equity Detectives at Work: Investigating the Divergent Dangers of the ESSER Fiscal Cliff



Many urban and rural districts came into the pandemic forecasting deficit spending





**So, what does strategic transformation
look like going forward?**

High School Redesign: a Once-in-a-Century **OPPORTUNITY**

Felt Needs

- More students “off-track” in number of credits to graduate
- Ongoing staffing and teacher job sustainability crisis that is vicious cycle
- Need for learning acceleration and support
- Lack of connection, engagement and attendance

A Vision for Student Experience

- Standards-aligned work that is connected to what students care about and what’s next for them, at times that work in their schedules
- Teachers who have the energy and support they need to build strong relationships, respond to students’ needs, and affirm students’ interests and identities
- Varied opportunities to earn credits, and targeted structures to meet students’ distinct learning needs along the way
- Deeper support for navigating students’ wellness
- Connections to relevant and timely postsecondary opportunities

Source: Education Resource Strategies

Six big shifts in how we organize schooling can help us redesign high schools toward new visions with sustainability and scale

1. More flexible use of time and staff to enable **individualized student learning and support.**

2. Student-driven **sequences of learning experiences with durable results** that enable students to **earn credit flexibly inside and outside** of the school building.

3. Time and roles are organized so that **students are known and have support to navigate** a personalized plan toward college/career success.

4. **Dynamic, expert-led teaching teams** with MUCH more time to collaborate to understand student need and to plan engaging instruction and student supports.

5. **Structures for student wellness** including expanding systematized social-emotional and mental health supports.

6. **Efficient and coherent use of technology and partners** to support learning and wellness.

Six big shifts in how we organize schooling can help us redesign high schools toward new visions with sustainability and scale

Making these shifts requires new educator compensation systems and new school designs: learning program, staffing and teaming models, schedules and delivery options.

Districts can take a more strategic approach to resource trade-offs as they design for sustainability

For the same cost as...	A district could...			And make it sustainable through...
<p>Across-the-board class size reductions</p> <p>Reduce class size for all teachers by 3 students</p>	<p>Support early literacy</p> <p>Reduce class size in grades K-1 from 20 to 15</p>	<p>Personalize instruction</p> <p>Provide 3 additional hours/week of small group instruction in middle school</p>	<p>Strengthen high school transition</p> <p>Reduce teaching loads for ninth-grade ELA and math teachers from 130 to 85</p>	<p>Limited, strategic class size increases</p> <p>Increase average class sizes in middle school & high school elective courses</p>

AND

AND

Typical “across the board” approach to compensation pressure will close out strategic options for reimagining the teaching job

For the same cost as...	A district could...		And make it sustainable through...
<p>Across-the-board pay increases: Increasing the salary scale by 5% for all teachers</p>	<p>Reduce early-career turnover: Accelerate pay in the early stages of a teacher’s career</p>	<p>Incentivize long-term retention of the most effective teachers: Create teacher leader pathways that extend teachers’ reach and increase pay by \$10,000/year</p>	<p>Compensation aligned with contribution to student learning: Phase out pay for advanced degrees, and instead pay for increased roles and contribution.</p>

School system leaders cant do this on their own, they will need help from states, community leaders and philanthropy

DATA

State-wide data tools to identify

- Diagnose challenges
- Measure progress
- Inform decision-making
- Ensure accountability

POLICY

Create flexibilities, such as:

- Alternative crediting options
- Flexibility from class size requirements
- Moving from rigid seat time requirements to other ways demonstrating learning
- Changing teacher of record policies to enable other ways of providing high quality instruction

INVESTMENT & SUPPORT

- Dedicated funding to transition to new models
- Recommended career pathways
- Curated regional and on-line course offerings
- Implementation assistance
- Research to study the effectiveness of innovations and highlight best practices

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Unprecedented financial stress caused by loss of federal funds, continued student need, enrollment decline, and pressure on compensation **creates a STARK CHOICE**



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Empower district and school leaders to **redesign** schooling and **enable** tough choices and trade-offs

