MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR ESSER FUNDS
Reflecting on Recovery & Redesign Plans Before Finalizing SY22-23 Budgets

November 16, 2021
AASA Webinar

Unprecedented Needs + Unprecedented Resources = New AASA Supports

AASA ARP Committee

Leadership
Resources
Uptake
Influence
Essential Question for the AASA/EducationCounsel ARP Project

How can districts use ESSER funds to meet immediate needs and redesign toward a more student-centered, equity-focused, and future-driven approach?
Superintendents’ Initial Reactions to the Guiding Principles & Self-Assessment Tool I

After incorporating the ARP Committee’s feedback, we engaged Large Countywide & Suburban District Consortium superintendents in an interactive workshop centered on the Guiding Principles and Self-Assessment Tool I.

- I would use this with my executive team and principals to get us focused more sharply on how the funding is landing in schools, how it aligns to our strategic plan, scalability and why the accountability is important.

- Very helpful. I think this will be especially helpful for our Teaching and Learning team as we think about sustainability and the idea of recovery does not mean “go back to normal.”

- The thought questions and structure of the tool is helpful. I can use/plan to use with my leadership team to level set and create/advance ownership and alignment in the use of ESSER funds.

- I think that thinking more deeply about what we are planning is important and the questions will help our teams as they work through planning for ESSER.

- Guiding principles definitely resonated with me. I wish I had this when we were formulating our plan, but alas...it is still a great audit tool.
“Living Documents”

As with ARP ESSER State Plans, the Department believes that ARP ESSER LEA use of funds plans are living documents.

The Time Is Ripe

Most ESSER funds are available for districts to spend through September of 2024. Accordingly, there are two more school years and three more summers to leverage these funds to support an effective and equitable recovery.

We hope the guidance and especially the self-assessment tools help district leaders identify potential revisions/tweaks/pivots/etc. in their recovery plans.
Balancing the Reasons & the Barriers

Reasons
- Data
- Evaluation
- Stakeholders
- Current Context

Barriers
- Redo Process
- Perceptions
- Capacity

Presenters
- Noelle Ellerson Ng, AASA
- Dan Gordon, EducationCounsel
- Ellie Cash, EducationCounsel
- Andi Fourlis, Mesa Public Schools (AZ)
Reacting to the Case for Reflecting & Revising

REACTION WATERFALL
Consider these questions:

1. Where do you come out on the case?
2. What barriers would you face?
3. How can you/we mitigate them?

Draft your response to any/all in the chat but do NOT press “enter” yet

When we give the signal, press “enter” and review the waterfall

Agenda

1. The Case for Reflecting & Revising
2. AASA Learning Recovery & Redesign GUIDING PRINCIPLES
3. AASA Learning Recovery & Redesign SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS
Overview: Learning Recovery & Redesign GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Learning Recovery & Redesign Guidance begins with **four Guiding Principles**.

These cross-cutting ideas are less about what you decide to do with all your available resources (especially but not only new federal ESSER funds). They are more about **how** you decide and how you translate those decisions into spending and implementation plans.

![Guiding Principles icons: Plant Seeds, Center Equity, Use & Build Knowledge, Sustain Strategically]

Guiding Principle 1: **PLANT SEEDS**

As you recover from the pandemic and use ESSER funds to address immediate needs, how can you also make choices that begin or accelerate the long-term shifts you want for your district? **In other words, while you fill holes, also plant seeds.**

One way to help make those choices is to start with your own strategic plan — or with AASA’s Learning 2025 framework — and plan backwards to this moment. Another is to pause when making spending choices and ask whether a different choice (even a slightly different one) might create more impact toward your long-term vision and goals. Regardless of how you approach it, your ESSER funds should help you make progress on big priorities.

**Sample Look-Fors**

- Your plan helps staff develop the knowledge, skills, and mindsets that will be needed to realize your long-term vision.
- Your plan includes multi-year initiatives that mature and/or scale over time.
- Your plan explicitly connects ESSER spending to your desired long-term shifts.
Guiding Principle 2: CENTER EQUITY

Your ESSER decisions should reflect a commitment to meeting everyone’s unique needs and an acknowledgment that the pandemic did not affect everyone in the same way. Do the hard work to understand what individual students, staff, and schools need and then allocate your resources accordingly with specific attention to those students and communities most impacted by COVID. Remember: equal is rarely equitable. Also, a truly equitable recovery must also include addressing any systems that create or perpetuate inequities. If things were inequitable before the pandemic, your recovery should not just go “back to normal.”

Sample Look-Fors

- Your plan connects resources to needs, even if it means different funding levels across schools.
- Your plan centers student voice and experience.
- Your plan tackles long standing inequities.

Guiding Principle 3: USE & BUILD KNOWLEDGE

Even under the best circumstances, there are no silver bullets and no perfect plans. And an ongoing global pandemic is clearly not the best circumstances. To maximize your chances of success, start with what is known and then learn and improve as you go. For each part of your plan, determine how you will leverage (and adapt) existing research and evidence — including the science of learning and development — collect data, measure progress, continuously engage your internal and external stakeholders (especially students), adjust approaches, and learn more about what’s working for whom and under what conditions. Use some of these non-recurring funds to invest in the systems and people necessary to continuously improve at the district, school, and classroom levels. Establish a culture that values learning and improving over preserving the status quo.

Sample Look-Fors

- Your plan invests in evidence-based approaches that are appropriate to your context and within your capacity to implement.
- Your plan includes continuous improvement processes
- Your plan includes explicit plans for evaluating the implementation and/or impact of key recovery strategies.
- Your plan builds school and district capacity to regularly use and build knowledge.
Guiding Principle 4: **SUSTAIN STRATEGICALLY**

ESSER funds are available through September 2024. On one hand, this is a substantial amount of time. On the other hand, it’s not forever. Plan carefully for the end of these supplementary funds or risk going over a “fiscal cliff.” If you’re planting new seeds, how will you change underlying cost structures so you can sustain what grows? How can you use ESSER funds to lay the groundwork for a more equitable funding formula? What are you learning along the way about what to stop and what to sustain? Which investments will continue to pay dividends and should be set up to continue over time?

**Sample Look-Fors**

- Your plan identifies other sources of funds that can supplement spending through post-ARP recovery years.
- Your plan builds long-term partnerships that add capacity.
- Your plan includes an explicit timeline for deciding what to sustain and how to sustain it.
- Your plan identifies up-front or one-time costs of long-term strategies and uses ESSER funds for these foundational investments.

Poll Questions

- Which Guiding Principle is **MOST** present in your current plan?
- Which Guiding Principle is **LEAST** present in your current plan?

![Plant Seeds](image1.png)

![Center Equity](image2.png)

![Use & Build Knowledge](image3.png)

![Sustain Strategically](image4.png)
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Self-Assessment Tool I: A TOUR

Each two-page Self-Assessment Tool I includes:

- Description of the Principle
- Reflection questions & space to reflect
- Examples of “look fors”
- Resources to consult
- Action planning table

Self-Assessment Tool I: HOW TO ACCESS

To access Tool I after this webinar...
1. Open the PDF titled “AASA Learning Recovery & Redesign Guidance - 11.12.21”.
2. Find the bullets labeled “SELF-ASSESS” below the descriptions of each of Guiding Principles (pages 2-3).
3. Click on the link for the principle you want to reflect on. It will automatically open an editable Microsoft Word version of Self-Assessment Tool I specific to that principle.
4. Save the document on your device and start answering the questions.
What’s Next?

Recs for Using ESSER $ for Learning 2025

More Self-Assessment Tools

Webinar with ERS on Budgeting & Sustainability

More That’s Responsive to Your Needs

Thank you!

Feedback & Suggestions: tinyurl.com/Recovery-Redesign-Feedback

Questions: dan.gordon@educationcounsel.com & elyssa.cash@educationcounsel.com