



Federal and State Education Funding Update webinar  
February 23, 2023

Questions and Answers: Content has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was due for reauthorization after the 2020-21 school year. Did that reauthorization occur or have schools been relying on the omnibus appropriations bills to receive funding for their schools? If ESSA were to be reauthorized in the coming years, what improvements if any could be made to the statute to better support funding for education?

A really good question. To answer the question directly, no, it was not re-authorized. When Congress creates a law, it authorizes, and most laws have to be reauthorized from time to time. Historically, the educational programs, K-12 education programs have been reauthorized on a 6-year cycle. Every 6 years, Congress decided to take a look at the law, make any necessary changes including new programs, or taking away some programs or whatever it happens to be. Now, if a K-12 program isn't reauthorized it doesn't go away. It just keeps running, as is. No Child Left Behind was signed into law January eighth, 2002, and it lived on for quite some time until 2015. So, it was more than double the normal authorization period. As we were going along in 2020, 2021, there was no way given the pandemic and everything else that Congress was going to reopen an authorization, but programs stayed funded because of the appropriations which was mentioned in the question. In terms of what adjustments may be needed, I'm not hearing all that much noise about it. I don't see a reauthorization of ESSA on the horizon for probably a couple of more years, but I may be wrong.

How can STEM programming (e.g., robotics and coding) be best positioned to access ESSER funding?

A lot of student programming taking place with ESSER funding and after school programs, once you start looking at learning recovery, what states are doing there's a lot of focus on reading, obviously, particularly given how reading scores have tanked in the NAEP assessment results, the recent results. But it's not to say that only reading is part of these learning recovery programs. There's certainly still programs going out there, and other enrichment programs as well. So I would look for after-school programs if I work in that space and see what local districts are doing, and again, an education company, or vendor, whatever we decide to call on publisher. They can't apply directly for the funding, so you have to find a school district or a group of school districts that have an RFP out there that needs support for whatever you happen to offer.

What are the funding streams to support educational innovation, social emotional learning, and emerging digital learning trends to support urban students post-pandemic?

Another very good question. Well for starters, the American Rescue Plan earmarked funds, ESSER funds, within ARP. Those can be used for social and emotional learning as you know, in student support, so they can be used and are being used. Another area to look for funding, Federal funding, is again Title IV. The student support and enrichment grant, which could be used for students learning and behavioral health is the phrase used, I believe, in some of the laws. In terms of digital learning, and that also look at Title IV. That's where the ed tech money is in the in Federal K12 programs, and likewise the innovation funds are also in Title 4. In terms of innovation, education, research, some of that comes out of the Center for Education, statistics and stuff like that, but I would focus on the relief funds and looking at Title IV.



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Is funding earmarked for Science of Reading? What are state funding restrictions regarding Science of Reading? Which ones are more open?

ELA programs have become much more complex than they used to be and with complexity in some cases that brings added costs because of the different types of features in the programs are. If it's print, different types of individual books are being used. Another thing that appears to be going on is that states may be preparing for changes in an ELA curriculum because of all the Science of Reading bills that have passed. I've been tracking state and federal legislation, and I had a client all the way back in 2017 ask me to track Science of Reading legislation. There's been hundreds and hundreds of bills. So far this year, there's 43 that look to do a variety of things. In some cases, it's to establish statewide Science of Reading programs or to compel districts to use Science of Reading. There are some that are establishing statewide screening and intervention programs. There's a great deal of activity going on in Science of Reading and I believe that states may be recalibrating their ELA adoptions for that and then districts may be doing it as well in the non-adoption states. So it may be that we're kind of in a wait and see a period to see what these sorts of changes bring about.

What is the true deadline for ESSER funds to be spent, and what are districts spending this on, what are they buying?

I think I kind of previewed a little bit when I was talking about the sort of funds, the spending has shifted somewhat. With the CARES Act in 2020, there was a lot of focus on public health and supporting teachers and students with mental health services. There was a lot of emphasis on public health and schools that were remaining open to some degree, cleaning supplies were being purchased. Another big area in the early years of the pandemic was buying educational technology, a lot of devices, a lot of software, a lot of broadband that was being purchased. The CARES Act would have been used for many other educational purposes and monies were used for it. But as time moved on, as schools began to reopen, the other 2 tranches of funds put more of a focus on learning recovery programs, and we're seeing a great deal of that now, and those are taking different forms. In some cases, it's direct, individual tutoring, small group tutoring, there was extended day. There have been all sorts of new forms of delivery, including digital for learning recovery. It's a major focus, and most of the States have created learning recovery programs. In some cases, a state like California has a huge program. They're using state funding of about 15 billion dollars for a learning recovery program. It's obviously the largest in the country.

If you are in the school business and you're looking for ESSER funds you can't apply to them directly, they have to come from the district who hires you or the state, and in the case of statewide initiatives, I think learning recovery is pretty much where it's at. I think there's still a fair amount of educational technology being purchased and used. So those are kind of the broad things that I'm seeing.

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Are there examples of what districts and states are doing with programs that were created or expanded with ESEER funding once that funding expires?

It's a question that a client asked me recently, and one of the things that client has been doing is making sure that in all the tracking of State legislation. I take a look for certain state programs that they've actually been able to work their way into in terms of the funding and seeing how they're supported. It's a huge question and a good one. Will all these programs just suddenly end on September thirtieth? Probably not. But what are States going to do about the funding and it's a very huge question, because there's all sorts of talk of a coming recession. You can read the business press, which I do every day and there seems to be a consensus that there probably will be a soft recession in late 2023 or 2024. That influences policymaking at the State and Federal levels, so, it's really kind of a wait and see.

Are we going to see the dreaded funding cliff in October 2024, and what does that look like?

Well, once again, it depends on whether there's a recession. When there's recessionary conditions, tax revenues go down, and when tax revenues go down in the states, education funding, and all sorts of other funding, including highway funding, etc., states switch to austerity budgets for as long as it takes, and that's just a great unknown. The recession that really started in 2008, but most people think of it in 2009, that had ramifications for the K- 12 Education Market, well through 2012. I don't think that a lot of companies who were my members when I was with the Association of American Publishers felt that they had really started to recover until about 2012. It was a long time. Now, I don't think anyone is predicting that type of recession, but it all depends.

Where can a person find a comprehensive overview of all the states regarding state funding amounts and trends?

That's a very good question, because there's just so many moving piece to it. I write a number of analyses for all my clients but if you're looking for one single source, you know frankly, it's pretty hard to find. SIMBA education for many years has put out reports about the instruction materials market, and it takes a look at state funding and Federal funding, so you might want to look at that.

Frankly, I get a number of clients who come to me because they can't find it. You kind of have to follow it for years, so you can see the trends.

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Is there specific funding for healthy, balanced lifestyle tech hackathons?

Specific funding, I don't think so. You know there are health programs that are certainly purchased, but I don't know about specific monies for those. I think a mistake often made by education companies is that they go looking in the Federal or State budget for something very specific and sometimes overlook the block grants like Title I that has broad language for a range of things. In many education programs, particularly at the Federal level, the language is pretty broad. I mean, there's things that you can do with the funding. So sometimes looking too specific, you're not going to find what you want. But if you look broadly, you might very well land on something.

How can nonprofits that provide out of school programming best position themselves to receive this funding? Is it through a school partner's budget, or can they directly apply to the State?

You can do a couple of things that I said in recent answers. You really have to find a school district partner. Now, in some cases, again, states do run statewide programs. Take Tennessee, for example. Early on in the pandemic, they announced a very big statewide learning recovery literacy program, and it's been going for a couple of years, and will probably run through September thirtieth 2024, and they may even choose to keep it running after that, using their own state funding for it. So I'm sure that that through there, the state is hiring various vendors to do things. At the same time, districts are receiving money for that program, they may be hiring vendors to do things as well, including professional development or providing materials or digital learning components, etc.

Would funding for resiliency, non-clinical mental health and wellbeing be supported, or is it just really math, science, reading, the core subjects?

I assume the question is broadly based on Federal and state, and that I would think so. You know again, one of the things that I've talked a lot about is the Title IV enrichment grant, student support grant. A cornerstone of that grant used to be the old Safe and Drug Free Schools act. That law has language that is currently law in Title IV, but it had a lot of mental health supports a long time before. Now would it support everything that the question addresses? I'm not quite sure. I'll fall back again to what I said a little while ago, which is Federal education laws and a number of state education laws are pretty broad. States tend to get a little more specific, but it's because they're writing state laws up often to implement detailed assessment programs and things like that. Again, I would look at Title IV for mental or mental health issues. Take a look at [CASEL](#), which is an advocacy group that has worked on SEL issues for many years. They have very good resources, including some things on funding that we've seen there.

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What is leading the growth of the CTE focus and adoption, are there specific areas?

In state adoptions, CTE is a case where I will see a lot of specifics. There are some states that approve dozens and dozens of individual CTE programs. They may be manuals for students who are learning auto mechanics or electronics, HVAC systems. I was looking at South Carolina's State Adoption List several weeks ago, and there's all different sorts of programs in there. There are even manuals for hair styling and subjects such as that. So CTE does tend to be far more specific than other programs, but it's not the same with every state. Some trim it down to what they see as the highest enrollment subjects.

Related, is there a place where we can learn about all the States that have designated CTE funding?

All the states have designated CTE funding, but if you're looking for a list of dedicated, nonprofit education associations, you can try Perkins Collaborative Resource Network ([cte.ed.gov](http://cte.ed.gov)), or Association for Career and Technical Education ([acteonline.org](http://acteonline.org)).[cte.ed.gov](http://cte.ed.gov)

Additional websites mentioned during the webinar:

Economics: [edunomicslab.org](http://edunomicslab.org)

Simba Information: [simbainformation.com](http://simbainformation.com) (May require a subscription to access content.)