

Puerto Rico ARP ESSER State Plan Highlights

Total ARP ESSER allocation for Puerto Rico: \$2,968,079,229

ARP ESSER funding released to Puerto Rico on March 24, 2021: \$1,977,292,507

ARP ESSER funding released to Puerto on November 16, 2021: \$990,786,722

2020-2021 Preliminary Enrollment: 276,413

Top Priorities:

- Addressing unfinished learning through acceleration strategies
- Supporting the academic, social-emotional, and health needs of students and educators
- Addressing staffing shortages and capacity concerns in schools and regions

Highlights of Puerto Rico's Plan:

- **Returning to In-Person Learning:** For the 2021-2022 academic year, 770 of 860 schools are providing full-time in-person instruction, while 31 schools are providing remote instruction and 59 schools are providing hybrid instruction. Physical damage to school buildings as a result of earlier natural disasters has prevented some schools from opening for in-person instruction. PRDE projects that the remaining schools will be moving to in-person instruction in January 2022.
- **Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining Safe Operations:** In collaboration with the Health Department of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) has conducted three vaccination campaigns designed to increase vaccine awareness and trust. Vaccination is mandatory for educators and staff in public schools. As of September 2021, more than 96 percent of school personnel was vaccinated, more than 75 percent of students ages 12 through 15 years were vaccinated, and more than 85 percent of students 16 years or older were vaccinated. Furthermore, in September 2021, a collaboration agreement was formalized between PRDE, the Puerto Rico Department of Health, and VocesPR to promote the vaccination for students 12 years or older, through the initiative Vacu Tour Back to School. Additionally, the PRDH developed a vaccination plan to provide the vaccination through phases. Phase I included the pediatricians, hospitals and pharmacies, achieving the vaccination of more than 20 thousand children. Phase II starts later this Fall and is called the Vacu Tour Kids. Vaccination clinics will be coordinated between the PRDH authorized providers and school directors.
- **Addressing the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time:** PRDE will use ARP ESSER funds to expand and extend tutoring services provided by the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), prioritizing students with disabilities among other groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. The Professional Development and University Relationship Institute in collaboration with UPR is offering tutoring services for students from the 3rd and 12th grade. PRDE plans to expand these services to all students and extend the tutoring program through 2024.
- **Investing in Expanded Afterschool Programs:** PRDE will use ARP ESSER funds to expand its Extended Academic Enhancement Initiative, which is an extended-hour supervised study and tutoring program available to all students in math, science, English, social studies, fine arts, physical education, school health, and occupational programs. Schools will provide additional support for students with disabilities, students experiencing chronic absenteeism, students with health issues, students experiencing discipline challenges, students with low academic achievement, and other groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. PRDE has rolled out the Student Profile Platform that provides school communities detailed data and information regarding their students' academic achievement and the precise subject matters where students

require additional academic interventions. In addition, PRDE has implemented the Resfuerzo Academico Extendido, (RAE) Project (Extended Academic Reinforcement), which is currently impacting over 600 schools and is set to be implemented in the remaining schools next school year, and offers three hours of additional academic support to students in math, English, science, and Spanish.

- **Supporting Students' and Educators Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs:** PRDE will use ARP ESSER funds to hire more school health staff and evaluate the effectiveness of social-emotional health interventions. PRDE plans to use ARP ESSER funds to recruit 429 school nurses and 116 additional school psychologists. In addition, to help schools identify and respond to the impact of the pandemic on student well-being, PRDE will support schools by performing initial screenings for all students, identifying students at-risk for mental health concerns, and addressing students' mental and behavioral health needs. An interdisciplinary socio-emotional team will assist teachers through this process.
- **Supporting Students with Disabilities:** To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students with disabilities, PRDE has developed guidelines and protocols to assist in identifying any skill loss, lack of adequate progress, learning loss, or the emergence of new needs that students may have experienced.
- **Improving School Facilities to Promote Health:** PRDE will invest ARP ESSER funds to create classrooms that meet standards for accessibility and safety in response to the pandemic. PRDE will dispose of contaminated furniture that is presenting mold, fungus, or rust built-up from the lockdown. In order to improve air ventilation for the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff, PRDE will work with specialized contractors to replace and update windows that are not properly functioning and will replace outdated HVAC systems with upgrades that meet standards identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Supporting the Educator Workforce:** PRDE has identified multiple shortages in the educator workforce. PRDE plans to use ARP ESSER funds to further compensate staff as a retention strategy. These strategies include, but are not limited to, improve school environments, provide needed academic resources, materials and equipment, stipends, recruitment of necessary school and Regional Education Office staff that support teachers, internships, professional development with credit hours, specialized professional development to support teachers, and target support related to accelerated learning.