

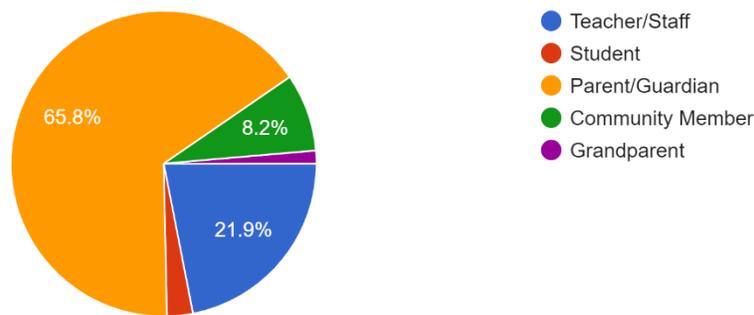
Metcalfe County Schools ARP ESSER Funds Plan

The leadership team of Metcalfe County Schools has developed, with valuable input from its stakeholders, a comprehensive spending plan for the district's allocated portion of the ARP ESSER III funds.

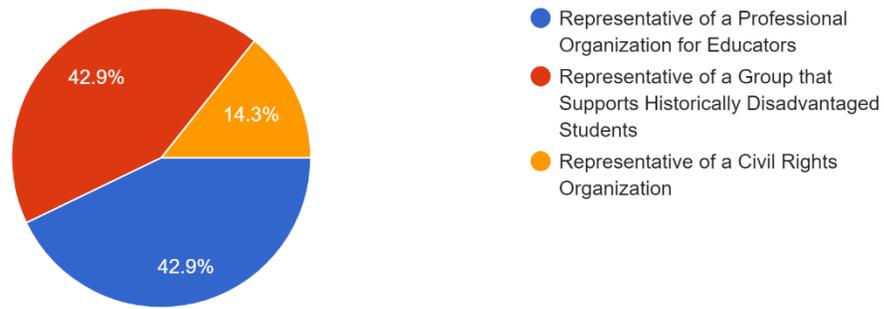
The leadership team consists of the superintendent, principals, directors of instruction, director of pupil personnel, and chief financial analyst. The stakeholders, for the purpose of our surveys, were divided into two groups. The first group: teachers, staff, students, parents, families, and community members. The second group: professional organizations for educators, civil rights organizations, and groups representing historically disadvantaged students.

All stakeholders provided feedback through online surveys about how the district should spend the more than \$7.3 million allotted to Metcalfe County to help safely reopen schools, sustain safe operations, and address the impact of the COVID-10 pandemic on students.

Of the first group of stakeholders, nearly 66% of those who responded represented parents or guardians, 22% were school staff, and 8% were community members.



Our district serves a predominately homogenous community with very little diversity. We have an average enrollment of 1,500 students, 95% which identify as white/non-Hispanic. Because of our size and demographic makeup, there are no local, active civil rights organizations in our area or educator unions. However, for our second survey, we reached out to the ACLU of Kentucky and the Kentucky Education Association for feedback. Our second survey also included groups that represent historically disadvantaged students: Head Start, Family Resource and Youth Services Center, Community Action of Southern Kentucky, and the local homeless shelter.



Results from both surveys and comments from all stakeholders assisted district leaders in crafting a plan that will address the following:

1. Prevention and mitigation strategies consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for reopening schools;
2. The academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based interventions; and,
3. Social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students.

PREVENTION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Those who responded to our stakeholder surveys indicated that reducing class size was the most important approach in implementing prevention and mitigation strategies consistent with the CDC guidance on reopening schools. The second most crucial approach was addressing environmental hazards inside buildings, followed by improving the air quality and improving ventilation, heating, and air systems.

The district plan will increase classroom space, expand buildings, and reorganize school grounds to address these issues. The majority of the renovations will occur at the high school, where we will extend our agriculture department, add a wing for aviation, and move our bus garage. These changes will help the district lower class size, enlarge the space between student workstations, and reduce congestion around our school buses. According to the CDC, “schools, where not everyone is fully vaccinated, should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures” (Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools). In addition, the district will install a state-of-the-art ventilation system and water refill stations. Other prevention and mitigation strategies include expanding seating and spectator spacing at indoor and outdoor sporting events.

ACADEMIC IMPACT OF LOST INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

More than 20% of our ESSER III funds, or approximately \$1.5 million, will be allocated to addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time by implementing evidence-based interventions. According to our stakeholder surveys, the curriculum is the number one concern, followed by interventions, professional development for teachers, extended learning opportunities, and technology upgrades.

Addressing the impact of lost instructional time starts with our teachers. The district will add at least one full-time virtual teacher who will focus on providing instruction and interventions for our online students. As many schools have experienced, substitute teachers are in short supply; therefore, our plan also calls for hiring a full-time substitute teacher. In addition, the district will recruit tutors for the middle and high schools and at least two RTI teachers at the elementary school. Class sizes will be smaller to allow more one-on-one instruction, and teachers will have access to programs that will include but are not limited to, MasteryConnect, Pathblazer, and IXL. The online blended-learning programs will help our classroom and virtual teachers with personalized learning, intervention, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, curriculum planning, and collaboration. The evaluation and selection of high-quality digital curricula to support students can be the answer to many challenges: meeting new standards, supporting diverse student populations, helping underperforming learners, challenging students working above grade level, and enabling teachers to “do more with less” in their classrooms (Hudson 15). The district will also provide a curriculum that will involve more hands-on learning activities and work-ready programs. Opportunities for students include working at the MC Shirt Shop and Old School Café.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Student wellness is a top priority for the stakeholders who responded to our surveys. Suggestions include providing additional behavioral and mental health services for all students. To address this need, the district will hire at least two school-based mental health professionals. The counselors will not only meet with students individually, but they will plan activities designed to reduce stress and anxiety for all students throughout the year. They will be tasked with developing and implementing curriculum and programs to improve the climate and culture at

each school in the district. With a free/reduced lunch rate of more than 73%, it is critical to offer these free services at school. Adolescents with public insurance, from low-income households and from racial/ethnic minority groups, are more likely to only access services in an educational setting, compared with services in both educational and other settings (Hertz, Barrios 85).

REMAINDER OF FUNDS

The remaining funds will be used to support a variety of programs, including transportation improvements. The purchase of one or more school buses will help the district reduce capacity, increase spacing, and keep students safe.

In the comment sections of our stakeholder surveys, we asked responders to list any other needs the district should address with the ESSER III funds. There was an overwhelming response for teacher, student, and classroom supplies. The district plan includes providing individual supplies for students and teachers to avoid any cross-contamination. In addition, the district will offer a stimulus incentive for all district staff members based on the extra duties and responsibilities required of them while we continue to navigate through the pandemic and address new COVID variants.

REFERENCES

"Guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 9 July 2021, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#physical-distancing. Accessed 27 July 2021.

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Hertz, Marci F., and Lisa Cohen Barrios. "Adolescent mental health, COVID-19, and the value of school-community partnerships." *Injury Prevention* 27.1 (2021): 85-86.