



PORT CHESTER-RYE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

FEDERAL AID INPUT SURVEY SUMMARY JUNE 2021

The 2021-22 New York State Budget included language requiring schools receiving additional Foundation Aid of more than ten percent and American Rescue Plan funding for the 2021-2023 school years to post on their website a plan of how such funds will be expended and how the district will prioritize spending in certain areas.

In the spirit of comprehensive planning and stakeholder engagement, State Budget language requires the district to have sought public comment from parents, teachers, and other stakeholders on the plan and to take such comments into account in the development of the plan. A survey in English and Spanish was accessible on our district website during the final weeks of June 2021. Reminders were sent to email addresses of school district families and employees, and ways to connect to the survey were also posted on the district FaceBook and Twitter accounts.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether each allowable category of spending is a “highest priority,” “high priority,” “medium priority,” “low priority,” or “not a priority.”

A few demographic questions at the end of the survey were also asked to sort input from different stakeholders.

Demographics of Survey Respondents:

- 63 percent indicated that they were parents in the district
- 26 percent indicated that they were district employees
- 8 percent indicated that they were other community members

Results of the survey have been taken into account in the development of our plan, with a special consideration being provided for the needs of low income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness. We thank all who participated in the survey for providing valuable feedback.

While respondents see each potential category of spending as a priority, some were prioritized as more highly importantly.

Spending Category	Percent who expressed this is "a highest priority"	Percent who expressed that this is either "a highest priority" or "a high priority"
Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' academic needs during the school day (such as instructional support specialists, response to intervention, reduced class sizes, and increased enrichment programs)	64.4%	91.6%
Safely returning all students to full in-person instruction (such as high quality air filters, increased sanitation, increased school security, vape detectors, and upgraded public address and phone systems)	64.4%	89.6%
Purchasing educational technology (such as additional Chromebooks, instructional software, or other items to support education)	38.0%	82.0%
Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, and mental health needs (such as therapeutic counselors, school psychologists, social emotional training for staff, mental health plans, and substance abuse and prevention training)	40.8%	78.4%
Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (such as summer and afterschool programs to help remediate academic learning gaps)	38.4%	74.4%

In addition, survey participants were asked the following question: *Please name and describe any other priority on which you feel the district ought to be spending American Rescue Plan funding (such as school repairs, improvements, and renovations; building projects to reduce class sizes; student programming not mentioned above; or other priorities important to you). Please name and briefly describe the priorities here.*

The most common answers were the following:

- Air conditioning in school buildings
- Technology instruction/enrichment
- Reduction in class sizes via classroom construction projects

DISTRICT SPENDING PLAN

Academic Programming

Over 91 percent of survey respondents categorized meeting students' academic needs during the school day as a "highest priority" or "a high priority."

In an effort to help younger students catch up in areas in which they may have fallen behind, the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District is hiring ten new Response to Intervention specialists in our four elementary schools and requiring that at least half be bilingual. Five of these specialist elementary school teachers are being hired through increased Foundation Aid, and another five are being hired with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding and the intention of using future funding sources in order to maintain these positions in the future.

In addition to addressing learning gaps, the district is also using increased Foundation Aid to hire teachers in programs to enrich student opportunities at all levels: four new art teachers, five technology and enrichment teachers, an additional physical education teacher, and two music teachers specializing in strings' instruction in our elementary schools; four more bilingual teachers at Port Chester Middle School; and six more teachers at Port Chester High School in order to expand mathematics, English, computer science, social studies, and special education offerings and to introduce a new theater arts program.

Finally, three new instructional support specialists are being hired to work with teachers and students in grades K-5 in the areas of Literacy, STEM, and English as a New Language/Bilingual Programs. Included in these enhancements to academic programming is also coaching for speech and language therapists to improve their delivery of services.

These academic programming initiatives amount to approximately \$2.4 million.

Health and Safety

Almost 90 percent of survey respondents categorized safely returning students to in-person learning as a "highest priority" or "a high priority."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District has prioritized the health and safety of students, district families, and employees. The District will continue to follow all protocols dictated by guidance from the New York State Department of Health, Westchester Department of Health, and the Center for Disease Control. We will also be guided by the professional advice of our District Medical Director. Federal funding will be used to improve schoolhouse ventilation, continue COVID-19 testing and screening, enhanced cleaning and disinfection measures, source protective equipment, and otherwise prepare for health and safety precautions called for in the coming year. Approximately \$700,000 of ESSER funding has been already allocated for this purpose with additional funding from the American Rescue Plan to be determined.

Technology

Eighty-two percent of survey respondents categorized purchasing educational technology as a “highest priority” or “a high priority.”

During the coronavirus pandemic, many realized the importance of technology as a valuable teaching tool. Chromebooks were distributed to each child in need of a device, and assistance was provided to those families in need of wireless internet access. Remote access to the classroom may still be important on emergency closing days, and we need to be capable of moving to online educational platforms if circumstances demand this in the future.

To make sure that all students have Chromebooks and access to an education, a portion of our federal funding will be dedicated to the purchase of new Chromebooks and classroom interactive whiteboards to replace those that are aging out.

Approximately \$1.4 million will be spent on technology improvement efforts.

Mental Health Needs

Over 78 percent of survey respondents categorized social-emotional supports and interventions as a “highest priority” or “a high priority.”

Throughout the pandemic, the social and emotional needs of our students, families, and employees have been a concern. Services have been provided (in person or remotely) by our skilled school counselors, psychologists, district social workers, as well as social workers contracted through Family Services of Westchester (FSW). In 2021, we will be complementing these services by adding six new bilingual psychologists (a new one in each building), renewing our contract with FSW districtwide while adding another FSW social worker at Port Chester Middle School, and restoring a lost social worker position at Port Chester High School.

In addition, we will be contracting to provide training and coaching to upgrade the skills of our school counselors, psychologists, and social workers in evidence-based interventions to improve student outcomes in the areas of distress tolerance, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and mindfulness. Finally, some of these student support specialists and some of our special educators will be receiving training in writing mental health plans, substance abuse and prevention, and suicide prevention.

Recurring spending in this category will be added to the school budget with additional anticipated, future Foundation Aid.

These efforts to address mental health needs will come from federal funding and amount to approximately \$1.2 million.

Summer Programming

Over 74 percent of survey respondents categorized addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (with summer programming as an example) as a “highest priority” or “a high priority.”

The Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District is offering programs this summer to support student learning in our elementary, middle, and high schools. Teacher recommendations and student performance data were used to identify students who could benefit from this summer programming. In addition, enrichment opportunities are being offered to students in these programs as well. Sessions will run during the month of July. The estimated cost of our 2021 summer program, which will be funded by ESSER funding, is estimated to be \$275,000. Together with CARES Act funding from an initial 2020 grant, summer programming to provide intervention services to students will be able to be fully funded with federal funding for the summers of 2021 and 2022.

Afterschool Programming

Over 74 percent of survey respondents categorized addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (with afterschool programming as an example) as a “highest priority” or “a high priority.”

Beginning in the 2021 school year, the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District will be offering programs to support student learning in our elementary, middle, and high schools. These afterschool programs will be open to interested students/families and provide a mix of intervention services and enrichment opportunities. Approximately \$500,000 is dedicated so far toward these initiatives.

Other Areas Under Consideration

Federal aid and additional Foundation Aid dollars are also being used to fund additional clubs and activities for students, teacher training, classroom supplies, field trips and other enrichment activities, and other programming learning experiences. In addition, capital projects that increase classroom space, provide affordable air conditioning solutions, and upgrade facilities are at the top of the list in terms of ways to address concerns expressed in our survey.

FUNDING SOURCE DEFINITIONS

Foundation Aid

Implemented statewide in 2007, Foundation Aid is awarded annually to school districts and determined by a formula resulting from a thirteen-year-long court case (Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York, 2006). Foundation Aid is additional funding for schools to provide a “sound, basic education” for all students. Important factors in determining Foundation Aid are differing levels of student needs and the funding capacities of different districts. In the Spring of 2021, New York lawmakers agreed to fully fund each district’s Foundation Aid over the next three years. As a result, the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District saw a large increase in Foundation Aid in its

2021-2022 budget, and if the law is faithfully executed, the District expects similarly large increases in the subsequent two years, attaining full Foundation funding in the 2023-2024 school year.

CARES Act = The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

The CARES Act was an economic stimulus bill passed in March 2020 by Congress. It provided funding to school districts via the State to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. In New York State, this was not additional funding to schools but took the place of funding the State had withheld from schools because of the national economic crisis. CARES Act funds must be spent by September 30, 2022.

CRRSA = Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act

The CRRSA was passed by Congress in December 2020. CRRSA funds may be used to implement actionable strategies to meet the urgent needs of students and educators as schools work to return to and safely sustain in-person instruction, address the educational inequities that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and address students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs. CRRSA funds must be spent by September 30, 2023.

ARP = The American Rescue Plan &

ESSER=Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief

The ARP was a second economic stimulus bill passed in March 2021 by Congress. In the case of school districts, ARP-ESSER funding is to be used to address their operating needs; safely return students to in-person instruction; address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students; implement evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs; and offer summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs. A certain amount of the ARP-ESSER funding provided to schools must be spent to address learning loss. ARP-ESSER funds must be spent by September 30, 2024.