

ARP-ESSER Funding Application

Bronx Community Charter School

August 2021

Application Development

Bronx Community Charter School, which is its own LEA (local educational authority), consulted with staff, surveying them about their priorities for the coming year and what they think would make the most difference for returning students. We also consulted with families at a meeting of the Community Council, similarly asking what the most important things for their children would be as they returned to school full-time and in-person. Both groups expressed their priorities, which we integrated into our proposed use of ARP funds. Similarly, we consulted with our middle school students and solicited their opinions.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the grant period. At our monthly Community Council meetings, we will give updates on programs funded by the ARP-ESSER grant and will gather feedback from families on what is effective or not effective for their children. At the end of each grant year, we will survey families and middle school students to gauge the impact of ARP-ESSER funds and make revisions for the next year if necessary. We will have a summer meeting for families to discuss funded programs from the previous year and plans for the year ahead, and will take feedback into account as we finalize those plans.

Program Information

In order to address learning loss and also follow CDC guidance on maintaining social distance as school reopens, Bronx Community Charter School is prioritizing creating smaller class sizes. The school is using ARP-ESSER funds to hire additional classroom teachers in order to reduce class size, so that each student gets more individual attention and academic, social, and emotional support in order to be successful. The hiring of those teachers in targeted grades allows school to have students in classes of 18 rather than 26, which not only provides them more academic, social, and emotional support but also allows for seating that is more distanced, around the room and student movement that does not put students into contact because of the smaller number of students in each classroom. The school is also using ARP-ESSER money to fund an additional school counselor to support students, a technology teacher to improve students' technological skills, a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Engagement to make the school more equitable for students and staff, and school aides to support students in a wide variety of ways as the school transitions back to full-time in-person learning. The school will also use ARP-ESSER funds to provide comprehensive afterschool programming for all students whose families want it.

Having fewer students in classes allows for significantly greater social distancing, which prevents the spread of COVID-19. This prevention of spread keeps more students uninfected, which in turn leads to less quarantining or class closure. Students need in-person school, and this prevention measure helps provide them with more time in school and less away.

Return to In-Person Instruction

Assessments have made it clear that students have suffered significant learning loss during this pandemic period, and need more academic support than ever. The school will continue to assess students periodically in reading and in math and will be able to measure student growth as they are supported by teachers in a smaller class setting. The school will assess students in reading using individual Fountas and Pinnell assessments four times each year, and use that data both to monitor student progress and to identify specific student needs. The school will use math assessments from the Eureka math program to monitor student progress and identify specific student needs. In addition, for students in grades 2-8, the school will also use data from NWEA/MAP assessments to monitor student progress and identify student needs.

Having smaller class sizes is an evidence-based intervention that will address the academic learning loss due to the pandemic. There are countless studies, including Baker, Farrie, and Sciarra (2016) and Zyngier (2014), with a fuller list at <https://classsizematters.org/research-and-links/>, that show that reducing class size enhances student achievement. The pandemic makes this even more critical than ever. The school is using more than 20% of its ARP-ESSER allocation to hire additional teachers which will enable class sizes in targeted grades to be reduced from 26 to 18. In those grades, there will be three classes of 18 students rather than two classes of 26 students. As the evidence shows, this will have a significant impact on students' academic performance.

In addition to hiring additional teachers in order to lower class sizes, the school is also using ARP-ESSER money to fund an additional school counselor to support students, a technology teacher to improve students' technological skills, a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Engagement to make the school more equitable for students and staff, and school aides to support students in a wide variety of ways as the school transitions back to full-time in-person learning. The school will also use ARP-ESSER funds to provide comprehensive afterschool programming for all students whose families want it. The afterschool program will be supervised by the Director of Support Staff and staffed by school aides, and 0.25 of each of their salaries will be funded by ARP-ESSER, reflecting the two hours of their eight hour day devoted to the afterschool program.

The school holds monthly Community Council meetings for families, staff, and any other interested members of the community, on Zoom. We will designate one of those meetings every six months to reviewing our plan for in-person learning with our community, answering questions, and collecting comments that we will use as we revise the plan. School leadership will review comments on a monthly basis, and use them to consider revision to the plan. Where appropriate, school leadership will use ideas from those comments as agenda items at future meetings, in order to discuss them more fully. After that, school leadership will make decisions and revise accordingly.