

OUR SCHOOLS



NEWSLETTER
FALL 2021



IN THIS ISSUE

ESSER FUNDING SUPPORTS
EXPENSES RELATED TO
PANDEMIC LEARNING

WHAT IS
A SCHOOL
LEVY?

STRATEGIC
PLAN
REFRESH

COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES
FOR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

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How great it is to be back in school buildings, seeing students and staff interacting face to face!

Even with masks on, you can see the excitement and joy they have being back in person.

We put a lot of thought and care into our transition back to in-person learning. Not only the vital health and safety aspects, but the social and emotional aspects as well. Not every child thrived in remote learning. Some students struggled. Some lost family members. Some had extreme anxiety about being back in person.

In this edition of *Our Schools*, you will read about some supports we put in place for social-emotional learning (SEL). We value it so much that during the first five days of school our focus as a system was SEL - to welcome students back to in-person learning and reconnect with our students. As many of our students have not been in a school setting for over a year, we wanted to dedicate time to helping them to reacclimate to school and connect with staff.

You will also read about ESSER funding and how we spent and are spending the temporary funding to support students and instruction. You will see we also started a 100% remote option for students in grades K-8 called Everett Virtual Academy. And, even amid a pandemic, the good work needs to continue, so you will read about our new strategic plan! It is a strong plan based on data that focuses on equitable access to consistent and quality instruction to ensure student success.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Our Schools* and from it, get a glimpse of the progress the district is making. We appreciate your partnership and support in serving our students. As I start my third year as your superintendent, I can truly say I am honored to be part of this district and this great community.

Be safe and be well,

Dr. Ian B. Saltzman



ESSER FUNDING SUPPORTS EXPENSES RELATED TO PANDEMIC LEARNING

March 2020, all Washington schools moved to 100% remote instruction with very little warning. This caused us to think of teaching in a whole new way. Everett Public Schools was well-poised to move to remote learning because in 2016 the voters passed the technology levy to make us a 1 to 1 district. That means every student in our district had a computer or Chromebook provided for them. We had the computers, but the younger students left them in the classrooms, so we just needed to deploy them rather than find a way to buy them. We are grateful to our community for passing that levy in 2016.

There were other, unique expenses the COVID pandemic brought our way. Thankfully the government recognized this and provided funding specific to these needs. These funds are separate from normal school operations, which is partially funded by local school levies.

Everett Public Schools was well-poised to move to remote learning because in 2016 the voters passed the technology levy to make us a 1 to 1 district.

Congress targeted billions of dollars for the **Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)** through three separate actions. Those funds were awarded to state educational agencies to address the impact COVID had and continues to have on elementary and secondary schools across the country. Everett Public Schools has been allocated \$35.7 million of those funds.

**\$35.7
MILLION**

Everett Public Schools has been allocated \$35.7 million of **ESSER funds.**

ESSER I \$

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security – CARES Act

\$2.6 million, signed into law on March 27, 2020, reimburses eligible expenses March 2020–September 2021.

These funds offset fiscal impacts of shifting to remote learning, including overtime for transition to remote, unemployment costs, school meals for all students, cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Some of our summer programs were designed to address students who experienced interrupted learning. We did this by focusing on academics and social-emotional well-being for all students who participated in our menu of programs. In addition, we added JumpStart and Cadence to our line up to provide more options to families. We also eliminated the tuition fee for OnlineHS, reducing barriers for high school students to participate in accelerated coursework.

Summer programming to address interrupted learning included:

- The **Everett Ready** program exploded! In a regular year, about 250 students attend Everett Ready. This year, all incoming kindergarteners were invited to join us, and 1,320 students took us up on the offer!
- [ESSER Funded] In August we launched our **JumpStart program** for students in grades K and 1 (incoming 1st and 2nd graders) to give students an opportunity to engage in learning at school just prior to the start of the school year.
- The **Elementary Summer Experience** for students in grades 3 and 4 (incoming 4th and 5th graders) was moved from July to August. Just like Everett Ready and JumpStart, the timing of the program allowed students and families an early start to the school year.
- [ESSER Funded] Our National Summer School Institute **Cadence** program was implemented for students who could benefit from continued focus on current grade level standards in English Language Arts and math prior to starting the next grade level. Participants included students in grades 4 and 5 at Emerson elementary school and students district-wide in grades 6-9. 111 students participated in the Cadence program.
- Each year, the district offers high school students the opportunity to accelerate their coursework in the summer through **Online High School (OnlineHS)**. This year, the program was offered tuition free. In a “regular” school year, about 200 courses are completed through OnlineHS in the summer. This year, 455 courses were successfully completed!

Typically, we would see 3,000 students participate in summer programs. So, with an **enrollment of over 4,400 students**, this summer was a great success!

ESSER II \$\$

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplementary Appropriations – CRRSA

\$10.2 million, signed into law on December 27, 2020, reimburses eligible expenses March 2020 – September 2022.

These funds helped with reopening schools and summer school, including keeping staff employed through the spring of 2021, adding staff during hybrid learning, education technology such as hot spots, training and repair, HVAC improvements and implementation of health protocols.

ESSER III \$\$\$

American Rescue Plan– ARP Act

\$22.9 million, signed into law on March 11, 2021, reimburses eligible expenses March 2020 – September 2023.

These funds reimburse expenses related to the Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan. The bulk of ESSER III funds is allocated to student support spending.

- Almost 60% is for enhanced learning opportunities for students, including summer school.
- 16% focuses on social-emotional support and equitable access:
 - 3 social workers
 - Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum and professional development
 - 2 behavioral specialists
- The remaining 24% is used for facility repair and improvements to reduce transmission and improve indoor air quality, cleaning and sanitizing supplies and hiring additional staff to support health district protocols like contact tracing.



STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH

Everett Public Schools has been implementing a well-defined strategic plan that was established in 2011 and refreshed annually. Much has changed in the past 10 years in the school district and in our community, including the arrival of a new superintendent and leadership team. In 2020, the superintendent and School Board members determined it was time to update the strategic plan through a comprehensive and inclusive process. The resulting strategic plan is based on extensive community engagement through a variety of iterative steps.

This ambitious, exciting and comprehensive effort will guide Everett Public Schools for the next five years and aims at bringing everyone together to meet the needs of all students.

Our school district has a long history of listening to our community. The first step in the strategic planning process was to review input gathered in previous years through surveys of the general community, parents, students and employees. The results of current and prior input were analyzed and synthesized to identify the most common district assets or strengths, and the most frequently mentioned weaknesses or opportunities to enhance district practice. An online survey was created providing all community members the opportunity to rate their level of agreement with these items. Over 1,200 people responded to the survey. We also held interviews with community leaders and focus groups with district advisory committees. The community input was considered in light of other district data and trends in our community. Using this as a basis, district leaders developed a draft strategic plan framework, which was then shared with school administrators, parent leaders and the

general community for feedback. Based upon this thorough research and community engagement, the School Board approved the strategic plan framework in February of 2021.

Our community input and student achievement data revealed several areas we can strengthen through our next strategic plan. The greatest opportunity for improvement – where over 40% of students and employees, and over 30% of parents strongly agree – is support for student mental health and social-emotional learning. Other opportunities for enhancement where high proportions of respondents strongly agree include cultural awareness and inclusion, and career connected learning.

Our student achievement data also reveals opportunities to enhance our work. Our student population is indeed growing more diverse, with more Asian, Hispanic and multiracial students. Our students also have more complex needs as demonstrated by increases in students who are low-income, Multilingual Learners or with disabilities. While our students meeting standards is increasing in some grades, we have seen a decline in 10th grade English/language arts and our 10th grade math performance is well below that of earlier grade levels. While our students perform at comparable or higher levels among similar Washington school districts in 3rd grade, in 10th grade our performance declines in comparison, particularly in math. We have significant gaps in achievement among student groups. Students who are low-income perform at substantially lower levels across all grades and subjects. However, even when comparing students within income categories, our Black and Hispanic students are performing at dramatically lower levels. These gaps in performance increase from elementary to high school. This type of data was integral in the development of our key strategies moving forward.

Our strategic plan is anchored by six Priority Student Outcomes, which will be achieved through focused work within strategic themes. Equity, cultural awareness and responsive practices are embedded throughout the plan.

The six priority outcomes, each with measurable objectives, will be achieved through six strategic themes which are accomplished by 21 initiatives. Each initiative has an executive sponsor, an owner and work led by multidisciplinary teams. Visit our Strategic Plan page on everettsd.org for more information and details on the plan.

SIX PRIORITY STUDENT OUTCOMES

Ensure
3rd grade
literacy

Increase
science
achievement

Increase
math
achievement

Reduce gaps
in achievement
among student
groups

Ensure students
are prepared to
succeed in college
and career

Strengthen
student wellness,
engagement and
safety



WHAT IS A SCHOOL LEVY?



Everett Public Schools is grateful for ESSER funding which provides temporary recovery funding to help with any learning enhancements needed, as well as social and emotional needs and health and safety. This funding does not cover the day-to-day operations of the school district, which comes out of the general fund. For 2021-22 this operating fund requires about \$370 million to run our school system from bussing and utilities to teachers, paraeducators and textbooks. The general fund is supported by state and federal revenue as well as local school taxes.

To cover expenses not funded by federal or state dollars, school districts must request funding from their local communities by seeking voter approval of the Educational Programs and Operation (EP&O) Levy, which usually is on a four-year cycle. They are called replacement levies because they begin when the old levy expires.

The size of a levy is capped based upon a state formula that sets a specific dollar amount. Districts estimate the dollar amount for each of the four years of the levy and ask voters to approve a fixed dollar amount for the taxes to be received. Actual collections are based upon the lower of the state formula or what voters approved in the levy.

They are called replacement levies because they begin when the old levy expires.

The county assessor's office then divides the "set amount or cap" between all property owners (private and commercial) in the district and the formula creates an estimated "tax rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Property Value" (AV). In essence, each homeowner shares a small piece of the pie. While the total dollar amount received by the district does not change, your piece of the pie could. When many new houses are built, there are more homeowners to contribute, and your piece of the pie is smaller, and you would pay less. However, if you do an addition or major home improvement, your piece of the pie may now be worth more in comparison to others, and you could pay more.

HEALTHY HABITS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What does Swiss cheese have to do with COVID? Each precaution is like a slice of Swiss cheese. When they are layered together, the "holes" are covered, and everyone is better protected from illness.

It is very important for everyone to wear a mask properly:

- Put it over your face and mouth
- Be sure your mask fits snugly against the sides of your face and under your chin
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- Masks should not have a "vent" or be made of material other than cloth (i.e. beads, etc.)

The district's COVID 2021-22 webpage has resources and information on what we are doing to keep students and staff safe while at school, following medical expert guidance and what the process is if there is a COVID case in your child's class. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are kept current, the updated 2021-22 COVID Family Handbook is available for download, all family communications are archived and the COVID dashboard is posted and updated weekly on Monday afternoons. Thank you for being great partners in our community's health.

Thank you for doing your part to wear masks, practice social distancing, stay home when you are sick, wash your hands and get vaccinated when eligible.



**Spread your wings
Not the virus**

CHATBOT CHET



Chatbot Chet is the newest member of our communications family and is available 24/7 to help answer questions.

Click the tab located on the lower right side of any Everett Public Schools' webpage and "Let's Talk!" If your question is not answered, it will be directed to the correct department to assist you further.

COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

School closures due to the COVID pandemic, health and safety guidelines, isolation and other unexpected changes have made mental health a priority in our community with broad impacts on students, families, teachers and administrators.

As schools opened their doors for in person instruction this fall, the comprehensive and proactive approaches Everett Public Schools have taken to provide for the social, emotional and mental health needs of our school community are evident and will remain at the forefront.

One of the six strategic themes to support the priority student outcomes in the refreshed strategic plan is "supportive culture." A focus this first year of the plan is to, "develop shared practices and training utilizing SEL (social-emotional learning), restorative practices, and culturally responsive tenets."

From social-emotional learning being integrated into everything at the start of the school year to enhancements in curriculum, tools and systems, personnel and professional development, Everett Public Schools is equipped to provide solutions for those struggling.

The first five days of the 2021-22 school year were focused on building student and teacher relationships, classroom and academic routines and school communities designed to establish a sense of belonging for all in each of our schools. For many students, interacting in a social setting after being isolated at home for the past 18 months, was cause for anxiety. It was important to approach the transition back to academics with intentionality and sensitivity.

Research has shown it is important to take a systematic approach to social-emotional learning, to create a common language around emotions and to teach that emotions matter so students can increase both a self and social awareness. Students can learn strategies to become "emotion scientists" rather than "emotion judges." By teaching to consider the perspectives of others, to process one's own role in situations and the impact of personal actions, a space is created for empathy, as well as clearing headspace to be open to academic learning.

An enhancement to established programs was a digital upgrade to a program called Second Step for elementary and middle schools. In the past, the school counselor would visit classrooms

to teach the content, which included equity and inclusion and how to tie them into social and emotional aspects. Now, teachers have access to the program and are teaching directly to their students which allows for the lessons to happen more often and become engrained into the culture of our schools.

In addition, a new framework is being implemented this year in secondary schools that comes from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER is a systemic approach to SEL that "aims to infuse the principles of emotional intelligence into the immune system of schools, informing how leaders lead, teachers teach, students learn and families support students." RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence: Recognizing. Understanding. Labeling. Expressing. Regulating.

The first step to implementing this program is with personal and professional learning for leaders and educators. The framework becomes sustainable when it becomes a part of how teachers operate. This is a focus this school year so the practice is authentically part of the culture and real to who we are as a school district. The program will continue into classroom instruction for students and family engagement and education next year. The plan is to expand RULER to the elementary schools but staggered a year later.

Evidence has shown that schools who adopt RULER have positive shifts in school climate, enhanced academic performance, better quality relationships and less bullying and aggressive behavior.

Another new tool available to parents, students and staff is Care Solace, a concierge program to assist in obtaining mental health services, taking away barriers to



finding help. This has allowed counselors to spend more time with students by providing a “warm handoff” to access mental health services when students would benefit from additional care.

Everett Public Schools also purchased licenses to a program called EmpowerU to have available for school-initiated identification of students in need. This program provides daily online social and emotional lessons and 1:1 Tier II coaching providing additional support and strategies to students beyond the classroom.

Our high schools were also each accepted into a cohort with UW Forefront in the Schools, a sustainable and comprehensive suicide prevention, intervention and postvention framework to strengthen the practices already in place in our district. The emphasis will be in high schools for the initial phase, with intensive training for staff.

An additional program providing all high schools with online lessons, assessments and parent resources is called 3rd Millennium. This is an alternative to suspension programs with a focus on substance abuse, bullying and conflict resolution.

Many of the new supports did not exist prior to COVID and ESSER III provided funding for SEL curriculum and professional development.

In addition to curriculum and professional development, three social worker positions were also added to Student Support Services to provide multi-tiered system support, including coordination and partnership with local agencies who provide services. In addition, they will continually recruit agency mental health counselors for our schools.

We are grateful for the trust our families extend to us every day. In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever to develop a supportive culture where each student is engaged, thrives and values learning.

We are grateful for the trust our families extend to us every day.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Everett Public Schools strives to include diverse voices, thoughts, suggestions and input in district decisions. We provide opportunities for families, community members, students and staff to express what works well and what might work better to create a positive social and academic climate in our schools. A list of district-level engagement opportunities are compiled on the engagement webpage as well as what actions were taken as a result of the feedback.

BACKPACKS FOR STUDENTS IN NEED

The Everett Public Schools Foundation supplies backpacks filled with school supplies for students who are in need each year. The program, 'Stuff the Bus for Kids' ensures each child in Everett Public Schools starts the school year prepared to learn. Students in need of a backpack may reach out directly to their school.



In August, over **2,100 backpacks** were delivered to our schools including the Virtual Academy.





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EVERETT VIRTUAL ACADEMY

New this school year is the Everett Virtual Academy (EVA), a 100% remote learning program for students in kindergarten through grade eight. EVA was created this summer as an alternative for families and when registration closed at the end of August to ensure staffing levels were adequate, enrollment was just over 700. The program is designed to engage students in grade level content and learning standards through a combination of live, online learning (minimum of 70% of student's schedule) and independent learning. Students are required to attend live instructional blocks through Zoom and to access online curriculum and resources through Canvas.



Nondiscrimination statement: Everett Public Schools does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Officer: Kevin Allen, 425-385-4100, KAllen@everettsd.org, PO Box 2098, Everett WA 98213

Section 504 Coordinator: Dave Peters, 425-385-4063, DPeters@everettsd.org, PO Box 2098, Everett WA 98213

ADA Coordinator: Randi Seaberg, 425-385-4104, RSeaberg@everettsd.org, PO Box 2098, Everett WA 98213



NATURAL LEADERS

The Natural Leaders Program is a family-centered, family-led program that serves the unique needs of each school community. Natural Leaders are multi-cultural families who want to learn more about the education system to support partnerships between families, community and schools.

Family engagement correlates with higher student achievement in education. The Washington Alliance for Better Schools (WABS) Natural Leaders Program uses an asset-based model to help families identify and cultivate the skills necessary to help overcome systemic barriers. Families then engage with community, school and students to implement culturally appropriate and effective partnerships between home and school leading to student success.

In Everett Public Schools, there are more than 250 Natural Leaders who speak 15 different languages.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Caroline Mason
- Pam LeSesne
- Andrew Nicholls
- Dr. Traci Mitchell
- April Berg

SUPERINTENDENT

- Dr. Ian B. Saltzman



Board of Directors: (back row) Pam LeSesne, Dr. Traci Mitchell,
(front row) April Berg, Caroline Mason, Andrew Nicholls