

OSPI's Priorities for ESSER Funds

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is following a process to evaluate and prioritize our supports and expectations for school districts as a parallel exercise to the work school districts have engaged in this spring to narrow and focus educational delivery. The following is an articulation of our commitments for 2020–21, and we expect districts will make these priorities in their work.

1. Support Students Furthest from Educational Justice

The impacts of fear, hatred, and systemic and structural racism within institutions cannot be ignored, and they yield tragic outcomes. Washington's public education system must engage in anti-racist capacity building, leadership, and resource allocation. Dismantling systemically racist structures will make progress on inclusivity and will better serve students of color, students with disabilities, students who are English learners, students who are migratory, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, students experiencing intergenerational poverty, and students who identify as LGBTQ+.

The work of Washington public schools is to prepare students for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement. Washington must create the conditions for each student to be educated in racially literate, culturally sustaining, positive, and predictable environments that intentionally prioritize the instruction and development of social-emotional skills, and mental health in addition to our primary focus on academic content.

2. Prepare for Health and Safety in 2020–21

OSPI is committed to supporting learning environments that protect student and staff health and safety. To do this, OSPI will partner with the Department of Health, the Office of the Governor, and the Department of Labor and Industries and will communicate any changing requirements for reopening schools. OSPI recognizes that school districts will continue working in partnership with local health authorities. Districts should establish plans for rapid transitions between face-to-face and continuous remote learning. Districts may be required to close based on decisions by a health authority.

To prepare for the 2020–21 school year, school districts will need to do the following:

- Establish plans for rapid transitions between face-to-face and continuous remote learning, which may be required based on health authority decisions.
- Create a flexible school calendar with additional days included to address emergency short-term school closures and the need to transition learning environments.
- Build a more effective and sustainable continuous remote learning model that will be ready to be deployed if schools are required to be closed for long periods of time.



3. Invest in Connectivity and Hardware

We must invest in digital access for all as a matter of educational justice. When access is available to all, schools can then focus on accelerating progress for each learner. It is an example of inequity that not every student, educator, or instructional staff member has access to reliable connectivity or hardware to maintain continuous remote learning. Without access to reliable connectivity and hardware, students do not have the opportunity to engage in asynchronous remote learning.

4. Leverage Local Expertise and Provide Training

Washington's public education system is responsible for responding to the impacts of our decisions on individual student groups. Powerful instruction requires high-quality professional development and the resources necessary to support it.

Building anti-racist school cultures requires educators to shift the way they plan, instruct, and assess student learning; build the climate to accelerate student progress rather than remediate; utilize authentic, productive diagnostic assessments to guide and engage learners; and employ Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which embeds Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive (CRE) practices to support students both virtually and in person. Educators must prioritize enduring concepts of content by narrowing standards to those most critical for student success in the next skill, course, or grade.

Subject to approval of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds (ESSER funds), OSPI will also support professional learning in select online learning management systems to more effectively deliver learning remotely if closures are ordered locally or statewide. Districts need to narrow their learning platforms substantially to help families navigate fewer platforms. One platform for an entire school district is ideal.

