

# Do Now, Build Toward: Leveraging ESSER Funds

To build the [Next Education Workforce](#), Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) works with schools and other partners to

1. provide all students with deeper and personalized learning by building teams of educators with distributed expertise, and
2. empower educators by developing new opportunities for role-based specialization and advancement.

District and school leaders across the country have the opportunity to fundamentally change existing structures by leveraging federal stimulus funds. **Leaders designing and supporting Next Education Workforce team-based models can use a “Do Now, Build Toward” mindset to make high-impact investments now that build toward a more diverse educator workforce, deeper and personalized learning, and greater retention of educators.**

## Building toward a more diverse educator workforce

- **Providing additional training, support, and certification pathways for paraeducators** to deepen their skill and advance in the profession. It is an opportune time to pay for paraeducators to develop specializations (e.g., reading tutors trained in the science of reading) that would count toward a future degree or professional certification. Local school systems and higher education institutions can partner now to create clear pathways to certification.
- **Funding paid teacher residencies** to increase the number and diversity of highly prepared novice educators. Unpaid residencies disproportionately favor students from higher-income backgrounds; using federal funds now creates time to plan for sustainably-funded residencies going forward. Review [this resource](#) from Bank Street College to learn more.
- **Building new community educator roles**, including literacy accelerators and project-based mentors. Federal funds could cover the cost now to create new training for such roles and to build partnerships with organizations focused on producing sustainable community educator pipelines. Community educator positions could be voluntary or paid (e.g., repurposing dollars from unfilled paraeducator positions).
- **Creating or expanding high school teacher academies** that provide robust “grow-your-own” pipelines of educators from local communities that reflect the diversity of those communities. Creative systems will also create incentives to recruit graduates of their programs (e.g., signing bonuses or priority interviews for summer school teaching assistant positions while in college).
- **Investing in high-quality online coursework** for students that is self-paced and/or taught by remote educators (potentially including courses for college credit). Now is the time to pilot bringing educators onto teams remotely, especially in hard-to-staff subjects (e.g., physics) or contexts (e.g., rural schools). With the potential of leveraging educators from across the world, it is likely that students will encounter a much more diverse educator workforce.

*“Do Now, Build Toward” is a framework that comes from our colleagues at [Education Resource Strategies \(ERS\)](#), with whom we collaborated on a first draft of this document. See more from them [here](#).*

## ▶ Building toward deeper and personalized learning

- **Hiring tutors** to personalize learning for individual students or small groups to address instructional loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. When done thoughtfully, these tutoring roles also help build the systems required for incorporating members of the community into educator teams going forward.
- **Purchasing or developing high-quality project based learning or interdisciplinary curricula** and support tools. Curricular expenses incurred now will set up teams to implement deeper learning opportunities going forward. Investments could also be made in professional development or hiring coaches to help educators plan and implement deeper learning.
- **Investing in competency-based curricula and systems** that support teams working with mixed-age groups of learners (e.g., 3rd-5th graders). Investments in coaches and professional development would also be wise.
- **Redesigning specific areas of the school to create flexible learning spaces** that better accommodate dynamic grouping and collaboration (e.g., creating cut-throughs between classrooms). Additional investments could be made in furniture that supports team-based models and deeper learning (e.g., larger tables, flexible seating).

## ▶ Building toward greater educator retention

- **Providing coaches or technical support** to schools and educator teams that are just starting to build team-based models. Transitioning to more flexible and dynamic staffing models takes time; early investments to support robust implementation in a few schools can create internal capacity in the system to support innovative staffing going forward.
- **Formalizing team collaboration time** by investing in the creation of schedules for multiple schools designing team-based models. Collaboration is critical to successful implementation of team-based staffing models; new schedules should prioritize common planning time and increased flexibility to dynamically group and regroup students.
- **Investing in personalized professional learning** to support the knowledge and skills needed to lead and work in teams, implement deeper and personalized learning, and develop specializations in areas to complete the distributed expertise needed across members of educator teams.
- **Investing in a credentialing platform** that allows for educators to pursue and be recognized for personalized professional learning.

## ▶ Beyond ESSER: Sustainable Next Education Workforce Models

While ESSER provides three years of funding, district-level leaders can also make shifts to sustain the investments beyond the funding period. Resource shifts to ensure sustainability can take on many forms, including:

- Creating flexible teaching teams and dynamic schedules that leverage educators in new and innovative roles
- Reducing external PD budget
- Leveraging technology and virtual learning in new ways
- Eliminating substitute teaching roles by providing coverage within educator teams
- Reallocating Title I and Title II dollars

Once the ESSER funds are used, school and system leaders will need to consider shifts in time and money to allow schools to build sustainable staffing models. Several [resources](#) are available to illustrate how such shifts can be made. Additionally, if you are interested in seeing real examples of the sorts of models leaders have created, please see these [school spotlights](#).