



LEA Use of ESSER Funds Plan:

Primero School received the ESSER III Grant in the amount of \$285,826. The intent of this grant is to provide LEA's (Local Education Agencies) the resources to address the needs created by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Determining Needs: The disruption of normal education services during the lockdown of 2020, and the recovery school years that followed, have manifested into a massive regression in student skill level, growth, social and emotional development, and many other areas currently being diagnosed on a daily basis. Our students may have returned to schools for full-time education, however, the gaps created by forced remote instruction, isolation, negative socialization, and many other factors have resulted in declining test scores, enhanced behavioral issues, severely increased levels of absenteeism, and unhealthy emotional responses to normal occurrences.

Primero may have suffered less than what has been found in typical schools within Colorado, but we still have felt the brunt of the impact caused by COVID-19 as revealed through district and local assessment tools (DIBELS, NWEA, etc), social/emotional surveys (Indigo and DESSA), and state testing procedures (CMAS, SAT, PSAT). In each of these areas, pre and post COVID-19 data have been compared and assessed to identify how much of a setback occurred, and what specific skills, traits, behaviors, and processes have been disrupted.

Our Special Education and Counseling resources have been sorely tested of late. While behavioral and discipline referrals remain similar to what they were before lockdowns altered our lives, the number of incidents and frequency of events has increased. One of the biggest areas of concern is the rise in school nurse visits. Issues that would have gone unnoticed just a few years ago are now cropping up routinely. Self reliance, independent thinking, collaborative skill development, and many other characteristics of student growth have been compromised.

Academic Impact on Lost Instructional Time: LEA's are charged with spending at least 20% of ESSER Funds addressing this concern.

The most effective method of dealing with lost learning time is to make up that time in a manner that is both consistent and efficient. Primero realized that holding school on Fridays during the 2021-2022 school year created the best opportunity to gather students of needs at the school periodically throughout the year. While focusing learning efforts around the strategy of providing small group instruction in review and intensive make-up sessions, Primero School is best able to meet the academic needs of students who fell behind during the pandemic, while simultaneously providing a social structure, emotional support, and positive group dynamics.

Primero scheduled these special "Friday School" days at strategic times from September 2021 through April 2022. The dates never coincided with the start of vacation periods, fell on questionable days of attendance (I.E. Good Friday), and were chosen as to never fall on back to back Fridays. There were originally 14 dates chosen and scheduled on the calendar, which was widely distributed to the community. Friday School days were always highlighted during the week preceding their occasion. "All Call's" were sent home frequently during the week of Friday Schools.

Teachers engaging in these sessions were highly committed to attending these days of instruction. A Secondary Period Schedule was created, including specials teachers presenting their areas of content—Physical Education, Art, Music, Business Applications, and Shop. Core subject teachers were always on hand to work with struggling students, or those just in need of getting ahead of the game in their coursework. The Elementary Staff contributed by providing enough teachers to conduct classes by grade level in ratios of one teacher per every five to six students. This small group strategy ensured high teacher-student contact time and created very favorable learning conditions.

The Ineligibility List of Secondary Students was a prime measure of Friday School effectiveness. More than 75% of ineligible students attending Friday School found themselves eligible on the Monday following those sessions. Even more inspiring was the near 90% rate of students in danger of ineligibility who by attending Friday School removed themselves from that category in as little as one day's attendance. Elementary Students attending Friday School were also proven to stay out of trouble at a higher rate than those opting not to attend, while classroom achievement was demonstrably higher for those taking advantage of the program.

From an eligible population of approximately 200 students—Grades K-11, Primero witnessed 122 students (61%) attend at least one day of Friday School. Daily attendance averaged nearly 60 students per event. In all, over 3000 student-hours of instruction took place.

Remaining ESSER III Fund Expenditures: How Primero spent non-instructional funding.

While providing direct instruction was the primary goal of this grant, Primero also used ESSER funding to address other aspects of the COVID-19 impact on our school. A total of \$15,000.00 was set aside for professional development and training. Several Primero Elementary teachers attended a multiday conference in Vail for reading intervention strategy development and implementation. The entire Pre Kindergarten Staff of “Puppyland” attended a two-day training seminar in Denver, in preparation for the Universal PK plan set to unveil in Colorado Schools in the summer of 2022.

Purchased services and teacher resources were also included in the budgetary process. Funds were set aside to purchase a subscription to “Boardworks”—a classroom and remote instruction virtual template that provides educators with hands-on applications of content instruction. Our distance-learning subscription with Edgenuity was also secured with these monies. This platform provides for our Spanish instruction, as well as the credit recovery program we use for summer school opportunities. Additionally, Edgenuity provides elective course options for students wishing to take classes not normally provided by Primero staff.

The largest non-instructional component of ESSER funding was allocated to technology acquisition. Replacing aging laptops, obsolete servers, worn out switches, and many other uses was deemed of high importance. Primero was successful in buying these items as well as document cameras, backup batteries (for the IT system), and other devices in high need, for the amount of \$53,750.00.

Some ESSER funding was held back, as indirect costs allowed, for future expenditures. Primero is in the process of increasing internet speed and efficiency to all school users. The long-term plan to acquire new fiber optic lines to the school is still in the works. ESSER funding will eventually play a part in this project’s completion. In the interim, Primero has secured higher bandwidth connection through fixed wireless service. All of these technology upgrades are designed to increase educational service efficiency for both live (in-person) and remote (virtual instruction) for the occasions becomes necessary.

Addressing the academic, social, emotional and mental health needs through interventions:

The plans to utilize ESSER funds have been carefully created to encapsulate as many strategies as possible in meeting the various needs. Primary concern with these areas of focus must center on increasing time spent in the building proper. Friday School has gone a long way toward making up for lost time and for increasing student abilities and skill sets, while repairing much in the way of social, emotional and mental health stability.

The students most affected by COVID were those without quality internet service at home. Quality remote instruction depended largely upon students being able to log on and participate on a consistent basis. Much of the funding in our ESSER III Plan was spent on the technological side of the problem. Increasing bandwidth, providing students with hot spots for home usage, updating servers, switches, and other equipment, and streamlining our distance learning platform, will create a far better system for effectively and efficiently teaching for years to come.

Friday School was tailored to primarily provide instruction to students with the most severe gaps in learning and other measurable skill sets. Students performing below grade level, or those struggling in classes, were prompted to attend at a far higher rate than students who demonstrated on-grade level skill and performance. If Primero School possesses a group of underserved students, these individuals were at the center of Primero's plans to address ESSER Fund spending. Instructing smaller class sizes contributed to a more positive learning environment and produced a greater return on time and effort expenditure. Additionally, Primero provided transportation for Friday School for all students, further ensuring any motivated student could attend classes.