**Ideas for District ESSER Work**

Districts will be receiving ESSER monies from the federal government through the American Rescue Plan. They will be able to spend their ESSER monies on a variety of activities. Some of the specified acceptable expenditures include education technology, summer school, after-school programs, instructional materials, small-group instruction, and “activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster-care youth.” Further, in this current round of funding (Round 2), they must spend 20% of their money on “learning loss” which includes “summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after-school programs, or extended-school-year programs.” In general, consider putting structures in place that will last longer than the funds will last. That means providing professional development, instructional materials, coaching, and policies and procedures that ensure that instruction continues across school years. There are many ways that SIM programs can fit into this bonanza of funding opportunities. Below are just a few ideas to tweak your creative juices.

**Special Education Programs**

In many schools today, students with IEPs have been served in the general education classroom and were served remotely, if at all, during the pandemic. If these students are not performing well on district assessments and failing to earn credits toward graduation, this is a perfect moment to have the special education teachers assigned to special rooms and to provide learning strategy instruction to help students “catch up.” Of course, this means a formal change in these teachers’ roles. Professional development will need to be provided to those teachers along with the needed instructional materials for them and their students.

Another idea is to use co-teaching of the subject-area classes and enroll the students with learning disabilities in those classes while the teachers use the Content Enhancement Routines (Course Organizer, Unit Organizer, Concept Mastery, Concept Comparison, etc.), plus embed instruction in some strategies like LINCS, Word Mapping, and FIRST in the coursework.

**Summer School and Extended-Day Programs**

School districts around the nation and universities have provided extra instruction to students in learning strategies for many years. Key learning strategies have been selected as the focus. For example, for students stuck at the fourth-grade hump in reading, they have been taught a package of reading strategies such as Word Identification, Paraphrasing and Summarizing, and Inference Strategies. Self-Questioning can be added into the mix (after Word Identification) if time allows. For students who cannot write complete sentences, the Fundamentals of the Sentence Writing Strategy and Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy are key programs. If the students have access to computers that can play interactive programs, the Capitalization, Commas, and Punctuation Strategies boost reading skills as well as the writing of complete sentences.

**Intensive Instructional Programs**

The Xtreme Reading Program and the Fusion Program have been designed to teach reading strategies to students who have reading deficits of two or more grade levels. Each program has a scope and sequence of instruction that lasts at least a full school year or two (in the case of the Fusion Program). A teacher needs to be assigned full time to the course and to teach five classes of students. Again, this requires setting up a classroom, assigning a teacher to the role of intensive instruction, and filling the class roll with appropriate students who can best benefit from the course.

**Tutoring and Small-Group Programs**

Strategic tutoring is the perfect intervention here. Students can be grouped according to the classes they are taking and failing. Tutoring can be provided after or before school or in study- hall periods. Teachers of general ed courses can provide study guides, and tutors use Strategic Tutoring to teach the students to make study cards and use the Recall Enhancement, Paired Associates, and LINCS Strategies to learn the information. The students can also be taught the Test-Taking Strategy to ensure they perform well on tests. The Possible Selves Program might be used to help students set learning goals to help them “catch up” in skill acquisition.

**Educational Technology**

Districts often do not have the hardware/computers that are appropriate for computerized instruction. Many districts have bought tablets which do not allow much interactivity between students and the software program. Sometimes, they have a single room devoted to housing computers, but the computers are not available daily for instructional programs that require daily instruction. Also, remote learning has become part of instruction, and districts might wish to expand their abilities to provide remote learning to students. In order to do this, they might need to purchase computers for students. If this is the case, provide suggestions about the kinds of computers and software they will need. If they wish to use remote learning, make sure that the computers and software provide the kinds of tools that allow students to receive learning sheets from teachers, write directly on learning sheets on their desktops, and send their work back to their teachers. Once desktop computers are in place, set up policies and procedures for instruction on these computers. For example, students with poor writing skills need to be assigned class periods where they can work on the Star Writer Programs or on learning the Capitalization, Commas, and Punctuation Strategies. Students with poor reading skills will need to be assigned to class periods where they can interact with the single-page learning sheets for the reading strategies after they have been taught each strategy. Students who are failing tests will need to be assigned to class periods where they can be taught the Test-taking Strategy. Students with poor social skills will need to work through the Socially Wise Program or the Self-Advocacy Program. Teachers will need to be assigned to the classes, learn the software programs, and provide feedback to students as they complete the programs and hand in final products. Professional development and coaching will be very helpful to them.

**Summary**

These ideas are simply meant to be a springboard to your thinking as you help districts decide how to spend their federal dollars.