

Use of Funds Plan

Excel Academy is eligible to receive \$1,963,557 in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Funds. A minimum of 20 percent of these funds must be spent to address students' learning loss and their social, emotional, and mental health needs arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The school provides instruction to juveniles in the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department's three residential correctional facilities. In addition, at another campus the school provides instruction, emphasizing high school equivalency, to students who have been involved with the juvenile criminal justice system.

Excel Academy sought stakeholder input through a survey, a meeting, and an opportunity for public comment at a school board meeting. Stakeholders included employees, special program directors, school principals, school administrators, teachers, school staff, students, parents, representatives from the correctional facilities, a homeless advocate, employees with mental health backgrounds, school board members, and civil rights organizations.

Learning Loss:

Excel Academy serves a student population who is 100 percent at-risk. Many students entering the school are two or three years behind grade level. To address learning loss attributable to the pandemic, the school is using ESSER III funds to pay for one additional set of four core subject teachers (math, science, English language arts, and social studies) to provide more individualized instruction at the Juvenile Detention Center campus. With smaller class sizes, these teachers are able to provide high dosage tutoring.

The school is using ESSER III funds to pay for data specialists at each of its residential facility campuses. The data specialists are responsible for obtaining educational information that provides a student's mode of instruction during the pandemic, grade level, and needs. By obtaining this information, the data specialists are better able to identify students who are candidates for credit recovery. The data specialists are tracking the impact of learning loss interventions on students.

The school plans to obtain software to provide students the opportunity to recover credits while they are enrolled in our charter school. Students will have occasions after the school day to recover these credits.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health:

Excel Academy is adding campus education support specialists (CESS) at two of the residential facility campuses. The CESSs develop individual learning plans for students. The plans are designed to meet academic along with social, emotional, and mental health needs. CESSs are to assist students leaving Excel Academy and going back to their home school districts by ensuring they are placed into the correct grade levels and courses. By transitioning students into their appropriate courses, any additional learning loss or trauma associated with a delay in enrollment may be minimized.

The school plans to obtain software to give students a way to communicate their social, emotional, and mental health needs on a daily basis to staff.

The school is working with juvenile probation staff to implement Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) to meet the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students. TBRI is a trauma-informed intervention designed to build connections between children and anyone who works with them.

Other Uses:

Excel Academy plans to use ESSER funds to continue to employ existing staff and to carry out activities necessary to maintain operations.
