

**PERFORMANCE IMPACT ANALYSIS: DESEGREGATION FUNDING
REALLOCATIONS TO SUPPORT “LEARNING LOSS” POSITIONS FUNDED BY
THE *ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF (ESSER) FUND.***

I. PROPOSED ACTION

Under the third phase of the *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER)* fund, all school districts that received funding were required to spend a minimum of 20% of funding provided to address areas of learning loss related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) was required to spend a minimum of \$34.5 million to support measures related to learning loss in students across the district. The district identified several ways to invest in areas that focused on learning loss. Learning loss investments focused on specific positions at every school. These were: Counselors, Curriculum Service Providers (CSP), Math Interventionists, Multi-Tiered System of Support Facilitators (MTSS), Reading Interventionists, Response to Intervention (Rtl) Teachers, Social Workers, and Teacher Assistants. As of November 30, 2023, these positions accounted for 231-FTE totaling nearly \$13 million in salary and benefits costs for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

With the ESSER program ending by September 30, 2024, the district has evaluated student achievement data to identify specific learning loss positions to continue funding beyond the life of the ESSER program. The specific positions that will provide support beyond the 2023-24 fiscal year are: Math Interventionists, Reading Interventionists, and Response to Intervention (Rtl) teachers. All other positions will be absorbed into existing funding available at school sites or will enter the position transfer portal. Beginning in January 2023, the district began a process to evaluate existing Desegregation funds across departments to determine where reallocations of Desegregation resources may be possible to support these learning loss positions. The proposed desegregation reallocations total \$3,538,388. These reallocations will take effect on July 1, 2024, for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

II. ISSUES

The funds provided by ESSER are currently set to expire on September 30, 2024. The expiration of these funds would create a vacuum of resources that would stall the academic progress shown these academic interventions, particularly for African American and Latino students. The funds from the

district's Desegregation fund will enable the district to continue offering these academic interventions and build upon the academic growth already experienced. State law currently caps the allocation of Desegregation funds, which requires the district to evaluate other components of the fund which can be applied towards these intervention initiatives.

The ESSER grant provided funds to TUSD to strategies and interventions to help mitigate academic learning that was lost or stalled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All public schools that received funds were required to focus on interventions that were evidence-based, as defined by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA)¹. The activities were required to address students' academic, social, and emotional well-being and to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable student populations. These included all major racial and ethnic groups, children of low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender and migrant status, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

According to a recent study by McKinsey & Company (2023), Arizona students had an average of 12 weeks of learning delay based on the performance quartiles from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) assessment.² The level of learning loss experienced because of COVID-19 caused more than 20 years of academic progress in reading and math to be completely erased. The focus of the various learning loss strategies implemented by the district was to not only mitigate the levels of academic delays that students experienced, but to begin creating strategies that are embedded in daily instruction to accelerate gains that were lost during the height of the pandemic.

The results from the Arizona Academic Achievement Assessment (AASA) from Spring 2023³, gave the district a true insight into the impact of these positions on student achievement. School letter grades assigned by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) showed the progress that schools have made, especially with investments from ESSER on learning loss strategies and positions. One-third of schools of TUSD schools increased their letter grade and half maintained their same letter grade. Two-thirds of TUSD schools received a letter grade of an "A" or "B" and no schools received an "F." In the 2021-22 school year, the one school that received an "F" jumped **three** letter grades in the

¹ Arizona Department of Education. (2021, August). ESSER III 20% Set-Aside FAQ. Retrieved from <https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2021/08/ESSER%20III%2020%25%20Set-Aside%20FAQ.pdf>

² McKinsey & Company. (n.d.). COVID-19 learning delay and recovery: Where do US states stand? Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-learning-delay-and-recovery-where-do-us-states-stand>

³ Arizona Department of Education. (n.d.). Data - Accountability & Research. Retrieved from <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data>

2022-23 school year and received a “B.” The school experienced a 72% increase in the total points earned in one year. To continue to sustain this level of academic achievement, the district recognizes the fact that these classroom intervention positions have the potential to continue to provide the progress necessary to make greater strides.

III. OBJECTIVES

The identified learning loss positions correlate with the academic achievement needs of students that are part of the original Desegregation order – African American, Latino, and English learner students. The district is proposing desegregation funding allocations from the following departments and with the following corresponding amounts:

DEPARTMENT	AMOUNT
Advanced Learning Experiences (ALE)	\$100,000
Assessment and Evaluation	\$50,000
Communications & Media Relations	\$125,000
Curriculum & Instruction	\$49,196
Human Resources	\$462,000
Operations/Facilities Management	\$100,000
Purchasing	\$290,865
Technology Services	\$800,000
Transportation	\$1,561,327
GRAND TOTAL	\$3,538,388

The district is proposing the option to support Rtl and Teacher Interventionist positions because of their direct impact on student academic achievement, particularly with the protected classes (i.e., African American students, Latino students, and English Learner [EL] students). The funding would focus on positions that are existing and filled, it would not create new Rtl and Teacher Interventionist positions.

IV. USP PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The administrator for each department affected by the reallocations identified where reductions in Desegregation expenditures could occur without adversely impacting USP programs for the purpose of supporting the intervention positions previously funded with ESSER. Section 15-910, Paragraph K of Arizona Revised Statutes⁴, caps the Desegregation budget at the 2008-09 fiscal year budget limit, therefore the costs for any

⁴ Arizona Legislature. (n.d.). Title 15, Chapter 9, Article 10. Retrieved from <https://www.azleg.gov/viewdocument/?docName=https://www.azleg.gov/ars/15/00910.htm>

additional programs or initiatives must be funded through a reallocation of existing funds to ensure that the district remains within the statutory budget limit.

The services provided within the targeted departments will continue through a new funding source or at a reduced capacity level without adversely impacting USP programs. The affected departments and USP-related activities are the following:

1. **Advanced Learning Experiences (ALE):** The district will use Auxiliary Operations funding to pay for fees for Advanced Placement (AP) exams for students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Reduced funding used to pay for travel and training for staff for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) implementation across schools. Training for AVID will continue as part of the district's current professional development activities.
2. **Assessment and Evaluation:** Reduce the salary and benefits for the Data Analyst position and transfer the cost through a reallocation of funding in non-Desegregation Maintenance & Operations funding. The services provided by the position will not be changed by this cost transfer.
3. **Communications and Media Relations:** Reduce funding for advertising and promotion of Magnet school programs. Reduced funding for advertising and promotion of non-Magnet program such as family engagement and back-to-school enrollment campaigns. Reduced number of enrollment events in the community. Alternative and more cost-effective strategies will be used to mitigate these reductions.
4. **Curriculum and Instruction:** Reduce budget capacity for added duty compensation for district employees to participate in professional development. Eliminate stipend paid to employee who does international transcript evaluations. International transcription evaluations will continue with responsibilities distributed among other staff members, reducing the need for a stipend. Reduce professional development supplies, conference registrations and consultant costs for professional development opportunities for teachers and staff.
5. **Human Resources:** Reduce Magnet stipends for teacher recruitment that are Desegregation funded. These funds are not USP mandated but have been approved through Board policy. The budgeted capacity for Magnet stipends has exceeded the actual need by over \$140,000.

Hard-to-fill stipends for positions in Exceptional Education, Math, and Science classrooms are not USP related, but are also approved through Board policy. These stipends are underutilized and have not resulted in increased recruitment

of these positions. There are currently no obligations for Magnet and hard-to-fill stipends for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

6. **Operations:** The recent approval of a voter-authorized bond program will allow the district focus on refurbishing and revitalizing the infrastructure of all district campuses. This will also allow non-Desegregation Capital Outlay to be used for preventative maintenance that will include focusing on schools with high concentrations of African American and Mexican American/Latino students.
7. **Purchasing:** The recent voter approval of the district's bond program will allow the district to purchase student transportation vehicles through the bond. The reduction in this department represents proportional amounts of Desegregation-capital currently used to make lease-purchase payments for school buses.
8. **Technology Services:** The department will not fill a vacant 0.5-FTE Research Program Manager. The department will refocus its efforts around more centralized services for technology support versus the decentralized model of using teacher technology liaison (TTL) as a technology support at every school site. Since TTL's are existing teachers, each school will continue to benefit from the expertise at their school site. The use of virtual training and readily available custom service has made the need for TTL's less necessary, and the stipends have become an unsustainable expense. Instructional technology will continue to offer numerous professional development opportunities in-person and online. The Instructional Technology Specialists continue support their region's schools. Finally, various license renewals currently funded with Desegregation Capital funds will now be funded within the existing non-Desegregation Capital funding available in the department.
9. **Transportation:** Currently, all school bus drivers are split-funded 50% from non-Desegregation Maintenance & Operations and 50% from Desegregation Maintenance & Operations. After evaluating the number of students who are using student transportation as part of the Desegregation plan for incentive or magnet purposes, it was determined that the Desegregation Maintenance & Operations budget will be decreased to 40% and the non-Desegregation side will be equal to 60%.

There are no proposed reductions or reallocations of Desegregation funding in the following departments: African American Student Services, Asian Pacific American and Refugee Student Services, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Instruction (CRPI), Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness (EDI), Family and Community Engagement, Fine Arts, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Interscholastics,

Language Acquisition, Magnet, Mexican American Student Services and the Multicultural Curriculum Department

V. IMPACT ANALYSIS: IMPACT ON PROTECTED CLASSES (AFRICAN AMERICAN, LATINO, INCLUDING EL STUDENTS)

A. Impact on Effectiveness of USP Program or Activity

Among the strategies incorporated in the USP is providing instructional interventions that support classroom instruction. These strategies include pull-out English language arts and Math intervention sessions, progress monitoring for student reading, uninterrupted blocks of Reading and Math Blocks. These require qualified educators in the classroom that can focus on literacy and math interventions with students across all schools.

ESSER-funded interventionists provide an opportunity for the district to create opportunities for students to receive focused attention in core content areas. The data analysis from the district's Assessment & Evaluation Department showed the strides that African American and Latino students made when they had access to a certified interventionist. The district wants to continue this highly effective approach towards supporting student academic achievement.

B. Impact on Other District Programs or Obligations under the USP

Below are the anticipated impacts, if any, to the effectiveness of any other USP activity:

1. **Compliance and Good Faith:** no expected impact on compliance monitoring and reporting requirements.
2. **Student Assignment:** no expected impact on school boundaries, magnet schools, and applications.
3. **Transportation:** no expected impact on student transportation services. While the funding around transportation will shift between Desegregation and non-Desegregation Maintenance & Operations funding, the level of services will remain the same.
4. **Administrative and Certified Staff:** no filled positions will be eliminated because of the reallocation. The make-up of the recommended Rtl and Interventionist positions are all certified with the following self-reported racial/ethnic makeup: 1 American Indian/Alaska Native, 6 Asian, 5 African American, 17 Latino, and 40 White. The racial/ethnic makeup of the district's

staff will be unaffected and will lead to the retention of more diverse certified staff.

5. **Quality of Education:** these reallocations will serve to retain Response to Intervention (RtI) and Interventionists with a specific design to support stronger academic growth in core content areas with students identified as minimally proficient. African American and Latino students had a 20% growth in proficiency in English Language Arts and Math. These interventionist positions have a direct benefit to support the USP's goal of increasing dropout prevention, create a stronger classroom environment for student engagement, and a stronger focus on meaningful targeted interventions.
6. **Discipline:** no expected impact on discipline outcomes. All the supports for disciplinary processes remain in place, by maintaining Restorative Practice Facilitator positions with existing levels of funding.
7. **Family and Community Engagement (FACE):** no expected impact on FACE structures or programs.
8. **Extracurricular Activities:** no expected impact on participation in extracurricular activities.
9. **Facilities and Technology:** During the period of technology expansion and intensive professional learning that has been provided since the USP implementation, TTL support for instructional technology is now being shifted to a centralized support. Any impact from the TTL's stipends being eliminated will be mitigated through the district's centralized support along with the continued support of the five regional Instructional Technology Integration specialists. The teachers who acted as TTL's will remain as teachers at their schools, so their expertise will continue to be available. Although the stipends for TTL positions will be eliminated, technology support for school staff is enhanced as training and support materials are available online. Moreover, the district has invested in implementing a new online service ticketing system to support the technical needs of the schools. The reduction in the Operations Department will be absorbed through existing budgeted capacity and through additional funding provided by the voter-approved bond program.
10. **Accountability and Transparency:** no expected impact on accountability and transparency efforts.

C. Data Sources & Assumptions

The Assessment and Evaluation Department conducted an analysis for these recommendations is based on the *Arizona Academic Standards Assessment (AASA)* in grades 4-8⁵. The analysis focused on the Math and English Language Arts (ELA) of the students in the 2022-23 school year. The study reviewed 72 elementary, K-8 and middle schools where 52 schools had Interventionists and Rtl Teachers and 20 school did not have these positions. The analysis matched the students in the two school groups so that they had equivalent ethnic backgrounds, AASA performance levels and socioeconomic status. The amount of growth in ELA and Math is calculated using the A-F Letter Grade AASA Student Growth Percentile (SGP) as the measure. However, it should be noted that there are additional factors that influence student achievement. The analysis did not control for complex school, classroom or individual effects which can also contribute to changes in student performance.

The characteristics of the students included 1,298 students in grades 4-8, where the schools had access to an Interventionist/Rtl Teacher, and 938 students that did not have access to these positions. The students included in the study had the following characteristics:

- Two years of AASA scores in ELA and/or Math (i.e., 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years).
- Scored minimally proficient in ELA and/or math in the 2021-22 school year.
- Remained enrolled at the same school all year in the 2022-23 school year.

The study included all students who met the above criteria, regardless of whether they received ongoing services from an Interventionist or Rtl teacher. However, the assumption is that minimally proficient students were most likely to have received these services. Students show low, average, or high growth in ELA and Math from the 2021-22 school year to the 2022-23 school year.

VI. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

A strategy implemented with the use of ESSER III funds was placing Reading Intervention Teachers, Math Intervention Teachers, and Response to Intervention (Rtl) at various TUSD schools. The primary task for these positions is to accelerate math and reading skills by working extensively with students. These educators frequently consult with core teachers to design and plan interventions. They support classroom teachers to help identify students eligible for interventions, but also to diagnose reading and math strengths/weaknesses to improve skills with appropriate techniques and materials.

The district's Assessment and Evaluation (A&E) Department conducted an exploratory study to determine the impact of intervention teachers on student

⁵ Tucson Unified School District. (2024, January). GB_Impact of Intervention Teachers 01-16-2024. Retrieved from <https://go.boarddocs.com/az/tucsonusd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=CYN5SRB710EAB>

achievement using the math and English Language Arts (ELA) scores from the 2022-23 *Arizona Academic Standards Assessment (AASA)* to review the impact of these positions. In the 2022-23 school year, there were approximately 100 interventionists and Rtl teachers in grades 4-8, serving approximately 52 schools in TUSD. The essential question for the study was: do schools with Interventionist/Rtl teachers have higher growth among Minimally Proficient (MP) students than schools without the position? A complete presentation of the study conducted by A&E is attached to this PIA as “Appendix A.”

The results of the study indicated that:

1. Minimally Proficient (MP) students with access to an interventionist/Rtl teacher in grades 4-8 showed high growth compared to students without access to these interventionist/Rtl teachers. In ELA, the growth for those without access to these positions was 21%, but the growth for those with access was over 29%. In Math, the growth for those with access was 26%, but the growth for those with access was over 33%
2. The percent of MP students in grades 4-8 with low growth in ELA was lower (38%) for those students with an interventionist versus those without access (46%). However, high growth among those with access to these positions was much higher than those with access (29%) versus those without access (21%).
3. In Math, low growth among those with interventionists was 42%, whereas those with interventionists was 34%. The high growth for those with interventionists was 33%, but lower (26%) for those without interventionists.
4. When you review the ethnic/racial ethnic backgrounds of the different groups, the results continue to be even stronger:

a. In ELA:

Racial/Ethnic Group	High Growth with Interventionist	High Growth without Interventionist
African American	32%	26%
White	29%	23%
Latino	28%	21%

b. In Math:

Racial/Ethnic Group	High Growth with Interventionist	High Growth without Interventionist
African American	36%	30%
White	33%	29%
Latino	32%	26%

VII. CONCLUSION

The role of Interventionist/Rtl teachers can vary among schools, with those implementing these positions demonstrating higher levels of academic growth among minimally proficient (MP) students, particularly in middle school grades. Interventionist/Rtl teachers cultivate a learning environment that facilitates greater growth among MP students compared to schools without these positions. Furthermore, the notable 20% increase in high growth among minimally proficient African American and Latino students underscores the importance of these specialized teaching positions in promoting positive student development. While students have made significant strides in academic achievement, it would be rash to assume that this represents the peak of their potential. Consequently, the district acknowledges the need for sustained effort and investment to build upon the progress already achieved.

The substantial increase in high growth among MP African American and Latino students strengthens the argument for continued support of these specialized teaching positions. The student growth percentile is determined based on how a student's AASA scores over two consecutive school years compared to those of their peers statewide who earned the same scale score in the first year. It should be noted that the growth metric differs *significantly* from proficiency levels. Nevertheless, such data-driven evidence provides a compelling rationale for maintaining funding for these positions beyond the expiration of the ESSER grant funding.

Date: April 4, 2024

Prepared by: Ricky Hernández, Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed and Approved: _____