

LEA Plan for Use of ARP-ESSER Funds

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy Charter Schools

June 2021

The Promise Academy Charter Schools (Promise Academy), in partnership with the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), have set a national example for addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic hit, our teachers immediately transitioned to a full-day, synchronous, remote instructional program. We provided laptops and hotspots to students who needed them, healthy meals to the community, virtual after-school programs to all students, and emergency relief funds to those in need -- all while consistently averaging attendance numbers well over 90%. When the 2020-2021 school year began, we executed a plan to safely return to in person instruction by implementing best practices in transmission prevention in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In doing so, we created a safe opportunity for our children to receive instruction that closely mirrored the pre-pandemic experience. Despite these best-in-class efforts, we understand that remote and hybrid learning environments are not ideal, and have resulted in deep-set learning loss that will take years to reverse.

With the aid of ARP and ESSER II funding, we will deepen our commitment to addressing the learning loss brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic over the next 3 years. At the center of this effort will be a team of tutors who will provide individualized and small group instruction to students who have been hardest hit by learning loss. These tutors will be assigned across all K-12 grades to focus primarily on foundational math and ELA skills. We will continue to provide an extended instructional day, Saturday Academy, and summer program for all students -- our tried-and-true strategies for addressing learning deficits.

Aiding our ramped-up instructional efforts will be a deepened investment in curricular resources, technology, and social emotional learning. Additional curricular resources will provide the tools our teachers need to enrich the learning experience; for example, an expansion of our school libraries will rebuild reading comprehension skills, which reside at the core of learning loss across all academic disciplines. Expanding our 1-1 laptop program to include touchscreen devices will make the learning experience more engaging, interactive, and personalized, whether in school or at home. And the further development of our social and emotional learning department will address a variety of non-academic challenges that have caused our students and staff to fail to perform up to their full potential through circumstances beyond their control. The effectiveness of these initiatives will be closely evaluated and, if effective, maintained through our operating budget beyond the expiration of the funding period.

Lastly, we will round out our efforts by ensuring that our most important asset in fighting learning loss -- our staff -- is used to its maximum potential. To this end, we will implement a Teacher Effectiveness department. This team of master teachers will focus on building and enhancing the capacity of our less-experienced teachers to provide high-quality, differentiated instruction to students at various academic levels. This investment in professional development will have the added benefit of decreasing staff turnover, which will promote institutional knowledge and

provide a more consistent environment for our scholars when it is needed most. Once we reach a comfortable threshold of institutional knowledge, many of the training & development duties can be transferred to school leadership, and the department can be largely dissolved. After availability of the funds, we will scale down the department as needed, based on annual reviews of its effectiveness, and absorb any remaining cost into our operating budget.

Funds Use Commentary

Investments in high-impact tutoring, and enhancements to SEL and technology are anticipated to be non-recurring items following the expiration of the award period. The teacher effectiveness organization will be piloted for the duration of the award period, and may continue post-award contingent upon the success of the program, state funding, and operational efficiencies.