

## American Rescue Plan Supports Schools as Tech Plays Vital Role

The rapid transition to remote operations and the in-person classroom changes needed to meet public health guidelines have created unprecedented burdens for K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Congress passed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, which includes \$122 billion for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) programs.

Designed to help districts reopen safely and maintain operations during the pandemic, federal funding has supported investment in technology that has helped schools respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Districts have counted on technology to:

- Enable remote work
- Manage student transportation
- Engage students and parents
- Keep operations running
- Manage absences and substitutes
- Support contact tracing

In fact, based on their experience during COVID-19, school districts are increasingly recognizing the importance of remote capabilities and digital workflows. Similarly, cities and counties are including business process automation, technology modernization, and continuity of operations among top 2021 priorities, according to e.Republic.<sup>1</sup>

Whether it's enabling remote work, eliminating paper workflows, managing absences and substitutes, or adapting bus routes, software has proven its value during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will explore how technology has supported districts during this crisis and how technology will meet future needs.

### ARPA's Support for K-12 Education

The March 2021 ESSER funding, which is part of ARPA, follows two previous ESSER funding rounds. (See Page 4 for an overview of the three ESSER funding rounds.) The March 2021 ESSER funding is designed to:<sup>2</sup>

- "Help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's students"
- Support activities that "maintain operation of and continuity of services"
- "Develop strategies and implement public health protocols"

School districts should follow U.S. Department of Education and state education departments for guidance.

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### Connecting Schools During COVID-19 and Beyond

Tyler's education solutions have supported school district efforts to continue operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These solutions will continue to optimize operations post pandemic.

“We’re so relieved to have implemented (Tyler) when we did. The Tyler Technologies software solution enabled the district to pivot to a remote environment more effectively during the pandemic.”

— Nancy Tolbert, Director of Financial Systems & Capital Assets, Cobb County School District, GA

## How Tyler Has Helped Schools Adapt to Pandemic Challenges

Tyler Technologies has worked hand in hand with schools throughout the United States to adapt to remote operational challenges and to support changes enabling in-person, remote, and hybrid learning. With a wide range of proven solutions, Tyler has helped schools respond to the crisis and prepare for future challenges.

Tyler’s cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) and HR solutions have been critical for school districts that have needed to transition their workforces rapidly to remote work. Because of inherent scalability, the cloud is well poised to help in times of crisis and adjust to meet the community’s evolving needs. In addition, cloud-based solutions take the pressure off IT departments to manage servers and make it easier to connect securely with remote workers.

Tyler has helped districts by implementing remote payroll operations, supporting COVID-19-specific financial reporting, and more during the pandemic. Finally, during this period of frequent changes, Tyler’s education-specific software has helped schools with the complex management of substitutes and student transportation.

## Enabling Remote Work

While the transition to remote work has been challenging, schools have managed to transform familiar in-person workflows to new digital solutions such as:

- **Employee access:** From updating personal information to making benefit selections, employees are empowered to update information remotely, eliminating paper forms and redundant data entry.
- **Virtual timesheets:** Inefficient paper processes and in-person handoffs and signoffs are replaced with digital workflows.

- **Content management:** Digital documents are available to remote workers throughout workflows, putting critical information a keystroke away rather than in multiple file cabinets, which may not be readily accessible.

**Investing in the future:** Self-service portals reduce redundant data entry and streamline payroll operations, eliminating paper workflows.

## Keeping School Operations Running

Despite social distancing guidelines, school operations, from school board meetings to office tasks, have continued thanks to technology that has bypassed the need for in-person meetings and paper-based workflows. Software has helped with:

- **Meeting management:** From remote meeting scheduling and agenda creation to minute generation, software has made it possible to hold meetings that meet school district guidelines.
- **Vendor access:** Despite a reduction in one-on-one staff availability, vendors can access payment and invoice information through online portals.
- **Data and insights:** The ability to monitor and share information about the health and performance of an organization has never been more critical. A data and insights solution provides easy access to key performance indicators, enables improved analysis, and simplifies report creation and delivery.

**Investing in the future:** The convenience of digital task completion has sped up adoption of remote options, and data and insights solutions have helped districts monitor and analyze performance to meet current and future challenges.

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“ARP ESSER funds may be used to develop strategies and implement public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on reopening and operating schools to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.”

— Office of Elementary & Secondary Education

## Managing Student Transportation

Aligning student transportation with CDC guidelines has proven to be one of the greatest challenges. Districts have counted on routing software that streamlines the complex work of developing new routes and schedules. Mobile apps have kept parents informed about route changes. Schools are using technologies that:

- **Optimize routing:** Modern routing software is all about flexibility, which is vital to adapting rapidly to new schedules and evolving guidelines. Routing software can automate different days of the week for different sets of students and modify student records, runs, and other information in what-if scenarios without affecting live data.
- **Create seating charts to support distancing:** Software can pattern-block certain seats and assign seats based on back-to-front loading, so no students are passing in the aisle. Unlimited, customizable templates and easy-to-use visuals make blocking and filling seats intuitive. Assigned seat numbers can show up in student records, in a parent app, and even on route sheets.
- **Support contact tracing:** Bus attendance software, which uses ridership data, can trace potential coronavirus-positive contact between students, drivers, vehicles, and runs. If a health concern arises, users can export the associated contact lists to begin contacting parents or employees.

**Investing in the future:** Modern transportation software will continue to streamline scheduling and ensure student safety from the moment they step onto the school bus until the moment they arrive home.

## Managing Employee Absences & Substitutes

During “normal times,” managing substitute and employee absence workflows is challenging. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has made absence and substitute management even more difficult. Fortunately, purpose-built absence and substitute management software has helped schools meet this challenge. Schools are employing technology that:

- **Simplifies absence tracking:** Substitute management software can seamlessly help track and approve employee absences, enforce leave balances, and provide insight into trends across buildings and employee types.
- **Fills jobs quickly:** Modern management software can match substitutes by school, subject, position, and employee, notifying them with one-click acceptance.
- **Integrates with payroll:** Substitute management software automates essential payroll processes, reducing errors and eliminating duplicate work by integrating with payroll software.

**Investing in the future:** Absence and substitute management software will continue to streamline scheduling and minimize classroom disruption. Integration with payroll will optimize efficiency.

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# ESSER Funding Timeline

Federal support has included the following:

## ESSER 1 (March 2020):

- Part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.
- \$13.2 billion. Funds available to Sept. 30, 2022.\*
- Fund use: The CARES Act includes allowable uses of funds related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19.

## ESSER 2 (December 2020):

- Part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplement Appropriations Act (CRRSA) Act.
- \$54 billion. Funds must be spent by Sept. 30, 2023.\*
- Fund use includes: Same as CARES Act.

## ARPA ESSER (March 2021):

- Part of the American Rescue Plan Act. (Sometimes referred to as ESSER 3).
- \$122 billion. Funds must be spent by Sept. 30, 2024.\*
- Fund use includes: Same as CARES Act, with other additions including use “to develop strategies and implement public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.”

\*— Includes 12-month Tydings Amendment extension

<sup>1</sup> e.Republic. First Look: 2021 Local Government Tech Priorities & Budget Outlook. December 2020. [webinars.govtech.com/First-Look-2021-Local-Government-Tech-Priorities-Budget-Outlook-133041.html](https://webinars.govtech.com/First-Look-2021-Local-Government-Tech-Priorities-Budget-Outlook-133041.html)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. [https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL\\_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf)

*Learn how Tyler can meet your K-12 needs.*