

ARP ESSER III

Recommended Allocations

Presented to the Board of Trustees
August 19, 2021

General Information

Located on the West side of the City of Manchester, Polaris Charter School's mailing address is 100 Coolidge Avenue, Manchester NH 03102. The telephone number is (603) 634-0034 and the website address is <https://www.polarischarterschool.org/>.

Polaris Charter School first opened to students in September 2012. Jennifer Murdock-Smith, our current director, has been a member of the school's administrative team since the beginning and has served as the sole Director of Polaris Charter School since 2017. Jennifer's email address is j.murdocksmith@polarischarterschool.org.

The mission of Polaris Charter School is to create a joyful and exciting learning community for intellectually curious elementary-aged children. Through an engaging, inquiry-based curriculum, our students will develop the ability to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically, and excel academically. Our program fosters creativity and the development of social and emotional skills, instilling a positive attitude about future studies and ensuring students are well-prepared for the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Polaris Charter School's reopening plan is posted on the school's website. As approved, the school will be fully open for in-person learning on September 1, 2021, with 120 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 5. During the 2020-2021 school year, Polaris remained open for in-person learning, offering our families a choice for dual enrollment in Polaris Charter School and VLACs or remote learning instruction. Last year, approximately 80% of students attended in-person and 20% attended Polaris Charter School remotely. Two staff members and one student tested positive for COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 school year and followed the CDC recommendations for quarantining.

Polaris is viewing the 2021-2022 school year as a transition from the management of the pandemic and dual enrollment to learning recovery in a physically and emotionally safe environment. In summary, Polaris Charter School is recommending the use of ARP ESSER III Funds to address student academic needs, provide social-emotional support to students and families, implement improvements to our instructional program through professional development, and to ensure our building is safe now and in the future.

The final plan for the use of ARP ESSER III funds will be made publicly available on the school's website and in hard copy for anyone wishing to review it with assistance from school personnel. The recommendations were formulated following a survey of possible strategies that was posted on the school's website and emailed to all staff, enrolled families, and the Board of Trustees, which includes parents and local representatives of the business and non-profit communities. A tentative budget for the following planned use of ARP ESSER III Funds is included in Appendix A.

Supporting the Continuous and Safe Operations of In-Person Learning

The results of the ESSER Recommendations Survey completed by staff, parents, and friends of Polaris Charter School indicated that repairing and improving school facilities to support student health needs was one of the top concerns (purchasing evidenced-based instructional materials and curriculum to help with learning recovery was the highest rated concern).

Polaris completed necessary work on the HVAC system in SY21. However, a recent commercial property assessment report was completed according to the standards set by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTME), which found evidence of past or present leaks in classroom ceilings, ponding water on the flat roof, and some water damage to exterior wall surfaces. Any or all these conditions could lead to mold and cause or aggravate respiratory illness. To respond to the survey results and the inspection findings, 15% of our APR ESSER III funds have been set aside to hire contractors to assess and complete needed repairs, over the next two years, to improve student health needs.

In addition, during the 2021-22, Polaris Charter School will use approximately 2% of the ARP ESSER III Funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies including the purchase of additional plastic table dividers, additional cleaning supplies, and PPE materials. The plastic table dividers were successfully used in 2020-2021 to minimize student-to-student contact during times of moderate to severe community transmission. With an additional classroom in place for 2021-2022, and due to normal wear-and-tear in the existing classrooms, additional table dividers need to be purchased to outfit the new room and replace some of last year's dividers. Having additional cleaning supplies, masks, and face shields available for staff and potential visitors will also enable Polaris to be continuously and safely open for in-person learning.

Addressing the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

1. Identifying individual student learning loss:

The Director and grade level teams will be responsible for making recommendations by analyzing interim and end-of-year assessments in math and reading, skill deficit identification, parent input at the before-school-opens family-teacher conferences, and classroom performance. Attendance records for 2020-21 will be analyzed to determine which students missed the most in-person instruction and/or did not consistently participate in remote instruction.

2. How Polaris will use the ESSER Funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based interventions:

During SY 21-22: Polaris Charter School will implement intensive after-school tutoring sessions for 1.5 hours in math and in reading four days/ week in a series of six 4-week sessions. These

sessions will be taught by two currently employed staff members, who observe and work with these same students during the regular school day and can easily collaborate with classroom teachers on appropriate lesson plans and materials to use. Some new books and math materials will be purchased for use in the after-school tutoring program to give a fresh but coordinated approach to instruction.

To encourage extending academic study at home, a computer and software lending program will be initiated with the purchase of additional Chromebooks and headphones. Priority use will be given to families with limited access to technology.

During SY 22-23: The after-school tutoring program will be continued at a reduced number of weekly sessions (three times per week) and by just one currently employed para-professional. Sessions may alternate between math and reading instruction.

As research and professional development (explained below) are completed on Tier I evidence-based instruction in math and reading, additional materials and books will be purchased for use in the classroom.

Replacement Chromebooks and headphones will be purchased to continue the at-home extended learning opportunities.

During SY 23-24: The after-school tutoring program will be continued at a further reduced number of weekly sessions (twice weekly sessions) and by just one currently employed para-professional. Sessions may alternate between math and reading instruction.

As research and professional development (explained below) are completed on Tier I evidence-based instruction in math and reading, additional materials and books will be purchased for use in the classroom.

Replacement Chromebooks and headphones will be purchased to continue the at-home extended learning opportunities.

3. How Polaris will use the ESSER Funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through teacher-directed professional development:

The School Director will be responsible for linking the 8 Polaris Charter School teachers with other public school classroom teachers in the greater Manchester area to participate in teacher-facilitated professional development focused on math and reading evidence-based interventions. The budget associated with this initiative includes teacher stipends for participating in after-school workshops, facilitator payments, and material/ printing costs.

4. How Polaris will produce evidence of the effectiveness of evidence-based learning loss interventions employed:

Polaris Charter School will continue to use *Lexia* to monitor individual student progress in reading and *Dreambox* to monitor individual student progress in math. The school maintains ongoing subscriptions to these online, individual, and skills-based assessments. In addition, classroom teachers write individual student learning goals each trimester, in collaboration with each student and parent, in a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). Each successive PLP is determined by the student's progress on previous learning goals as measured by both formative and summative assessments and classwork examples.

Addressing Learner and Community Needs

1. How Polaris will spend the remaining ARP ESSER Funds after addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time:

In addition to addressing student academic needs, providing the tools and professional development to lead our students forward, and ensuring the continuous and safe operation of in-person learning, Polaris recognizes the need for increased social-emotional guidance and support for our students, families, and staff. To address this critical need, a part-time administrative position has been extended to a full time social-emotional learning support position. The revised job description includes group and individual guidance, which will follow the school's adopted "Choose Love" Program. In addition, this person will be responsible for re-introducing and facilitating the School Reform Initiative protocols during staff meetings, (which requires specific facilitator training) and hosting evening sessions for families on topics such as "How to support your child in reading and/or in math," "Understanding stress, anxiety, and depression in children," and "Technology tools and applications used at Polaris Charter School."

The largest portion of the ESSER III funds will be used during the first year of the grant and the smallest amount during the third year of our allocation. This is due to the urgent need to take care of needed facility repairs, the need to immediately boost and then maintain social-emotional support for students and families, and the evolving timeline for research and professional development devoted to evidence-based curriculum and instruction. Budget details are provided in Appendix A.

2. How Polaris will use ESSER Funds to address the top priority identified by the New Hampshire Department of Education:

Individualized Instruction: The vision statement that has been most broadly implemented at Polaris, since its inception, is to offer a personalized approach to education. This is exemplified

in each student's Personal Learning Plan and by the unusually small student to staff ratio in each multi-age classroom. Individualization will continue to be emphasized at Polaris in all three years of ESSER Funds with the identification and modification of after-school tutoring plans, Chromebook lending program, and the provision of additional social-emotional services for individual students and families.

Addressing Educator Fatigue: New opportunities will be available to Polaris Staff through the introduction of teacher-directed professional development, the re-introduction of the *School Reform Initiative* (aka *Circle of Friends*), and the hiring of two new classroom teachers and re-definition of two administrative roles being filled by new employees.

Improving Family Engagement: One of the re-defined administrative roles is to provide additional social-emotional support to students, staff, and families. Included in the revised job description is the responsibility to plan and host evening sessions for families on topics such as "How to support your child in reading and/or in math," "Understanding stress, anxiety, and depression in children," and "Technology tools and applications used at Polaris Charter School." In addition, Polaris is planning to initiate a Chromebook lending program for families to encourage the extension of in-school learning to at-home learning. Being a small school, with only 120 students, enables all the administrative team to know each family enrolled, including siblings who have graduated from Polaris and siblings who may become future students at Polaris.

3. How Polaris will use funds to address the following additional needs identified by the New Hampshire Department of Education:

Slightly over \$3,200, or 3%, of the Polaris total allocation of APR ESSER III Funds has been set aside in the budget to be used at the school Director's discretion. The intent is to enable the Director to contract transportation for Manchester students participating in after-school tutoring, who usually arrive and depart Polaris on city school buses (students from outlying areas must be transported to and from Polaris in private cars by their parents). The Manchester school district may not be able to provide a late bus for a handful of Polaris students without additional compensation. Many Manchester families are unable to provide regular transportation to and from Polaris because of job demands and/or the lack of private vehicles.

[Addressing the Unique Needs of All Learners](#)

Polaris Charter School is committed to our non-discrimination policies to ensure that the interventions it implements will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English

learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and migratory students. Specifically, the academically data-driven selection process for student participation in after-school tutoring and the self-selection and teacher nomination for additional social-emotional support for students and families align with our non-discrimination policies. The targeted Chromebook lending program and the Director's discretionary fund for transportation speak to our effort to ensure the neediest families receive equitable services from our use of ESSER Funds.

Sustaining the Gains Made by ESSER Funds

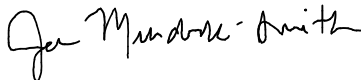
1. Planning for SY 2022-2023 and SY 2023-2024:

It is the intention that the ARP ESSER III Plan will include each of the next three school years and conclude with the start of the 2024-2025 school year. As Polaris implements its year one plan described above, an ongoing effort to evaluate and plan additional activities during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years will be prioritized. A year two plan will be presented for Board review and consideration no later than its April 2022 regular meeting, with the final year plan (2023-2024) presented no later than the April 2023 regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

2. Sustaining Priorities Beyond 2024:

The infusion of significant additional American Rescue Plan Act funding has provided Polaris Charter School with a unique opportunity to implement several changes and a few additional programs to support our students and families. However, it is vital to reinforce that this funding is temporary and will expire September 30, 2024. It will be of utmost importance that Polaris conducts an ongoing effort to analyze and evaluate the impact of all programs and supports, inclusive of those contained within the ESSER III Plan. As we make future budgetary decisions, it will be essential to ensure that the programs and supports implemented, have a demonstrable positive impact on students' learning and social-emotional development have priority for continued funding.

Director's Signature X



Date

8/23/2021

Jennifer Murdock-Smith, CAGS

APPENDIX A
Budget for ARP ESSER III Funds

| Category | SY 21 | SY 22 | SY23 | Total |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Personnel | | | | |
| Tutoring Paraprofessional(s) ¹ | \$5,760 | \$2,160 | \$1,440 | \$9,360 |
| Student Support Position ² | \$18,900 | \$18,900 | \$18,900 | \$56,700 |
| Instructional Materials | \$2,000 | \$3,000 | \$1,000 | \$6,000 |
| Professional Development | | | | |
| Teacher Stipends | \$888 | \$1,000 | \$500 | \$4,388 |
| Speakers' Fees ³ | \$500 | \$500 | \$500 | |
| Materials/ Printing | \$250 | \$150 | \$100 | |
| Technology | | | | |
| Chromebooks | \$4,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$10,000 |
| Headphones | \$400 | \$300 | \$300 | \$1,000 |
| Director's Discretionary | \$1,280 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$3,280 |
| Facility | | | | |
| Repairs | \$6,000 | \$10,396 | 0 | \$16,396 |
| Supplies | \$1,500 | \$500 | \$186.14 | \$2,186.14 |
| TOTALS | \$41,478 | \$40,906 | \$26,926.14 | \$109,310.14 |

¹ The budget allows for 1.5 hours of tutoring and .5 hours of prep time for two paraprofessionals working 4 days/wk. for 24 weeks in the first year; for 1.5 hours of tutoring and .5 hours of prep time for one paraprofessional working 3 days/wk. for 24 weeks in the second year; and for 1.5 hours of tutoring and .5 hours of prep time for one paraprofessional working 2 days/wk. for 24 weeks in the third year. Paraprofessionals are paid \$15/hr. with no benefits.

² The budget includes the extension of an administrative position from 20 hrs./wk. to 35 hrs./wk. at the contracted rate of \$25/hr. plus benefits for 42 weeks, which includes some time for administrative work before and after the student school year.

³ This allows for summer training sessions that charge fees for participation and for speakers hired to conduct family seminars on social/emotional topics.