

Cato-Meridian Central Schools: Federal Stimulus Plan (2021-2025)

Introduction

The 2021-22 enacted state budget includes language requiring local education agencies, such as school districts, that receive funding from the Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund allocated by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP-ESSER) to post on its website a plan by school year of how these funds will be spent.

New York has been allocated nearly \$9 billion in ARP-ESSER funds, with a minimum of \$8.09 billion (90 percent) going to local education agencies, including public schools. Cato-Meridian has been allocated approximately 3.6 million dollars as listed below:

[BOE Overview: Federal Grants](#)

Districts are also required to prioritize spending on *non-recurring* expenses in the following areas:

- Safely returning students to in-person instruction;
- Maximizing in-person instruction time;
- Operating schools and meeting the needs of students;
- Purchasing educational technology;
- Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, including the impacts of interrupted instruction and learning loss and the impacts on low-income students, children with disabilities, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness;
- Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs;
- Offering evidence-based summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs; and
- Supporting early childhood education.

In addition, districts must identify programs and services that will continue beyond the availability of these federal funds and how local funds will be used moving forward in order to minimize disruption to core academic and other school programs.

Before posting this plan, districts are required to seek public comment from parents, teachers and other stakeholders and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.

Public Comment

Cato-Meridian Central Schools used a variety of means to elicit Public Comment on proposed spending plans. All plans were aligned with the Cato-Meridian Strategic Plan which was

completed in the 2019-2020 school year with multiple stakeholders. The Strategic Plan indicated the following areas of focus for the district:

1. Academic Success For All:
 - a. CM will improve ELA outcomes for all children
 - b. CM will utilize technology to improve student learning and performance
 - c. CM will provide diversity of K-12 programing
2. Operations
 - a. Improve the climate and comfort of our buildings
3. Wellness
 - a. Identify and provide universal supports for SEL needs of students
 - b. Reduce number of bullying incidents
 - c. Reduce number of students engaging in substance abuse related behaviors

These areas of focus aligned with the requirements of the federal stimulus funds. Additional feedback was garnered from Board of Education Meetings, School Improvement Team Meetings, Faculty Meetings, as well as Staff, Parent, and Community Surveys. In addition, student feedback was gathered informally.

Sustainability

Cato-Meridian has developed a plan to sustain the financial outlays supported through the federal stimulus plan.

Facility improvements recommended align with needs identified within the 2020 Building Conditions Survey. By addressing these needs with federal dollars, the school district will be able to refocus the Capital Project more efficiently on long term district needs.

Staff additions were recommended with an understanding of CM's enrollment projections as well as anticipated retirements within the next four to five years. The district will offset the anticipated costs of these positions in the future through attrition thus resulting in non recurring expenditures.

The school district will also work with BOCES to ensure that needed programs, materials and supports that are not embedded into the school budget are sustained as needed through cost sharing options.

Listed below are the areas in which the federal funds will be targeted:

A. Facility Improvements to Support In Person Instruction:

UPGRADE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM HVAC – FIRST & SECOND FLOORS

HVAC UPGRADES

Description

Upgrade the ventilation system serving the thirty-one (31) elementary classrooms located on the 1st and 2nd Floors to improve indoor air quality (IAQ) and to provide individual ventilation and temperature control specific to each classroom. Includes removing the existing air handling units and installing new packaged vertical unit ventilators in each classroom.

Current Issues

The Elementary classrooms are currently provided with ventilation air from two central Air Handling Units (AHU-2 and AHU-3). Both AHUs were originally installed in 1996 and have reached the end of their expected service life. Each AHU provides heated ventilation air only with no air-conditioning or humidity control.

Other concerns include:

- AHU-3 location in basement boiler room resulting in corrosion of the AHU of its components.
- AHU-3 utilizes an in-ground area for outside air intake that has inadequate drainage and is also located near service delivery vehicle traffic.
- Inability of classrooms to have independent ventilation control.
- Limitations on improving air filtration.

Recommended Upgrades

Remove the entire AHU-2 ventilation system serving the 2nd Floor classrooms, including all ductwork above ceilings and all ceiling grilles.

Remove the entire AHU-3 ventilation system serving the 1st Floor classrooms, including ductwork in tunnels and all floor supply air grilles.

Installed new vertical unit ventilators (VUV) for each classroom with exterior wall louvers, heating coils, self-contained air-conditioning, and DDC controls specific to each classroom.

Other key benefits include:

1. Ventilation control specific to the needs of each classroom.
2. Ability to increase ventilation rates (via DDC controls).
3. Use of higher efficient MERV-13 filters for improved air filtration.
4. Each VUV will be equipped with self-contained air-conditioning that can be staged and modulated as needed for each classroom while operating a central air conditioning system.

B. Operating Schools and Meeting the Needs of Students:

- a. Installation of ADA Drinking Fountains: replace existing non-compliant water fountains with bottle fillers.
- b. Professional development for newly hired Registered Nurse in COVID-19 protocols, viral transmission and effective treatment of students.
- c. Installation of ADA Door Operator @ Elevator Vestibule
- d. Provide 2 automatic door operators to vestibule with card reader access

C. Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on all students, including low income students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students experiencing homelessness.

- a. Add a Special Education Teacher at the Elementary Level to provide a higher level of inclusive support within the elementary school.
 - o This will allow for more direct teacher contact within the general education setting to support students with disabilities with more individualized and specialized instruction.
- b. Provide additional ELL services within the general education setting to support students in developing stronger literacy skills.
 - o This will allow for more direct teacher contact within the general education setting to support ELLs language and literacy development.
- c. Provide enhanced instructional materials to improve access to instructional materials within the home and school setting.

D. Maximize In-Person Instructional Time

- a. Add a Literacy Coach to support differentiated instruction within the classroom level. The Literacy Coach will work directly with Teachers to improve literacy instruction. The Literacy Coach will engage in effective feedback cycles with teachers to support instructional planning, differentiation, classroom management as well as student engagement and assessment.
- b. Add a Curriculum Coordinator position to support the Academic Success for All goal of the Strategic Plan. This individual will coordinate the curriculum, supervise the Literacy Coach and direct the professional development offerings in the school district.
- c. Purchase Additional Instructional Materials to support student areas of challenge (specifically in the area of Tier 1 Instruction, research based reading interventions)

E. Offering evidence-based summer, afterschool and other extended learning and enrichment programs.

- a. Extended Learning Programs
 - i. Credit Recovery (7-12): Provide students at the 7-12 level with targeted credit recovery to ensure appropriate credit accrual.
- b. Enrichment Programs
 - i. Summer Enrichment Program
- c. Summer School Programming (K-6): Half day program targeting literacy and STEM development. Students identified based on benchmark assessments, attendance, and teacher recommendations.
- d. Summer School Programming (7-8): Targeted skill development for students at risk for academic failure. Students identified based on grades, attendance, benchmark assessments and teacher recommendations.
- e. Summer School Programming (9-12): Online summer school programming with direct teacher support on site. Designed to support credit accrual and on time graduation.

F. Purchase of Educational Technology

- a. Purchase Educational Technology to Support the Administration of Benchmark Assessments and Individualized Assessments

G. Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs

- a. Purchase Tier 1 SEL programming for K-6th grade.
- b. Support the current levels of Pupil Personnel Staffing.
- c. Provide professional development to support the Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) program.
- d. Instructional materials and professional development to support literacy.

Conclusion

This plan will be reviewed and modified if needed every 6 months to ensure transparency and accurate reporting of how the monies are allocated