

Your Question:

You asked if any states are utilizing COVID-19 relief dollars (state or federal) for emergency summer or ongoing full-scale resources for K-3 research-based literacy interventions. Specifically, you asked about programs that target students experiencing exacerbated opportunity gaps in reading.

Our Response:

School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have transformed the way students learn as many states transitioned to some form of distance learning. The digital divide and varying levels of at home educational support may exacerbate opportunity gaps in reading that already exist. According to a recent [study](#), structured mobile technology can help students with fewer educational opportunities at home to learn to read. The Khan Academy Kids application was not only helpful for children, but parents [reported](#) that they learned more about how to teach their child to read. As more young students are relying on at home educational support for their learning, states may consider using federal and state dollars to support the educational development of young students.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into law March 27, had many provisions relevant to education and education policy. Importantly, it provided funds for schools through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund and the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund. Ninety percent of the \$13.2 billion in ESSER funds must be allocated to Local Education Agencies (LEA) based on their Title I allocations. You can read about allowable uses and allocation requirements of ESSER funds [here](#). The CARES Act also allocates \$2.9 billion to states through GEER Funds. While GEER funds must be targeted to areas “significantly impacted” by the COVID-19 pandemic, governors have flexibility to use these funds to support childcare, pre-K, K-12 and/or post-secondary education.

The CARES act requires that SEAs oversee ESSER Fund spending, but these monitoring and reporting systems are still being developed as states allocate funds to LEAs. Many states are still in the process of allocating federal and state dollars for COVID-19 relief programs. You can find future bills related to education finance, literacy, and the COVID-19 pandemic using ECS’ [policy tracker](#) and [policy watchlist](#). Additionally, ECS will continue to update the [COVID-19 information page](#). Below I’ve included a few examples of state policy and guidance related to K-3 reading programs and COVID-19 funding.

State Examples

Idaho: The Idaho Board of Education released this [memo](#) around the use of CARES Act funding. The memo proposes an allocation for a summer K-3 literacy program through the Idaho Digital Learning Academy/Idaho Public Television (IPTV) Partnership. The memo also proposes an allocation for a fall K-6 literacy program.

Kentucky: The state issued [this guidance](#) around the use of ESSER funds. The guidance suggests the use of ESSER funds to expand the [21st Century Community Learning Center programs](#) that the LEA may already have in place. The guidance also suggests other reading supports.

North Carolina: As part of their COVID recovery act, North Carolina passed [S.B. 704](#). The bill allocates funding for targeted summer reading intervention for students in grades K-3 who were not on track to meet grade-level expectations.

South Carolina: Deputy Superintendent David Mathis [discussed](#) the potential of using funds to expand the state’s [summer reading program](#) for students in kindergarten through third grade who are struggling with reading. [S.C. H.](#)

[3411](#) (enacted) authorizes the State Superintendent of Education to encourage and promote districts to hold summer reading camps as part of the COVID-19 appropriations bill.