

Jack Hurley
Superintendent of Schools

Joseph Kelly
Business Administrator / Board Secretary

Dear Rutherford School Community,

Federal funding will allow Rutherford Public Schools to expand some of our academic programs, add key support personnel, and improve access to technology. This grant funding comes through the U.S. Department of Education in connection with other pandemic-related initiatives, and we're excited to share with you the ways we'll put it into action for the 2021-22 school year.

You may have heard about funding called the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II Fund). Rutherford was awarded \$763,784 in ESSER II grant funding. Our application focused on support for academic challenges and social-emotional adjustments, while also allowing for technological enhancements and personal protective equipment (PPE) purchases.

IN THE ACADEMIC ARENA, this grant funding will allow us to expand programs we have already used with success. If a student struggles with "learning loss" after the difficult year of 2020-21, we will have a greater capacity to guide him or her back up to grade level. We will evaluate and adjust the K-3 curriculum to determine how we can best meet student needs. We have already identified students in grades 4-11 who could participate in summer enrichment programs focused on language arts and math. We will implement a series of science-based instructional tools for our elementary students. At Union and the High School, we will institute a "zero hour" to start the day with additional help for students. All of these programs will be funded by ESSER II as we work to help students get back on track where necessary.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING was a concern of schools before the pandemic, but it became even more important as students contended with altered schedules, revised teaching techniques, and anxieties not directly related to education. We know that what happens outside of school can impact how students perform in school, and that was a driving force in our decision to seek grant funding for social-emotional supports. Starting this fall, we will contract with CarePlus New Jersey to provide clinicians for counseling services to augment our team of counselors not only for in-school sessions, but also for school clearances and in-home support when necessary. Clinicians will be based at Pierrepont and the High School, and be available for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Our CarePlus contract also includes some professional development so our staff members are better equipped to detect issues.

TECHNOLOGY proved essential in 2020-21, and grant funding will help us perform even better in the future. Expected enhancements include the establishment of internet hotspots to fill gaps where internet service was spotty or nonexistent. We will purchase additional Chromebooks for student use, and we've planned for touch-screen versions for our preschoolers and kindergartners who may have trouble with the fine motor skills required for mouse manipulation.

These expansions carry a significant price tag, and they are the kind of enhancements that we could not have done without the ESSER II grant. In addition, the federal government is expected to announce another round of funding designed to help local school districts safely reopen, continue daily operations, and address newly emerged student needs. The district's administrative team will closely monitor any opportunities to improve Rutherford's programs, facilities, and equipment.

Sincerely,

Jack Hurley

Superintendent of Schools