Using ESSER Funds for Targeted Academic Supports

Betting big on ESSER-funded Targeted Academic Support. An increasing number of high school students need more academic supports due to learning-loss and disruptions caused by COVID-19. This guide will reveal how to provide additional instructional time and targeted attention for students who require more targeted and intensive support to address gaps in foundational skills needed for accessing Tier 1 instruction.

We’re offering guidance for districts looking to fund targeted academic supports sustainably, using ESSER funds to get programs off the ground and to lay the groundwork for long-term change. We also offer concrete examples of staffing examples and scheduling models that you can implement today and adjust along the way to enable continuous improvement over time.

How can district and school leaders use stimulus funding to make “Do Now” investments that respond to urgent student needs, center equity, accelerate student learning, and also sustainably “Build Toward” long-term improvement?

See the other ESSER guides
District and school leaders can best navigate ESSER investment decisions by choosing doable starting points for the upcoming school year, while designing changes with a long-term sustainable vision in mind.

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What does the research say?
Effective academic supports includes high-quality, grade-level instruction for all students, with additional interventions based on need.

Effective academic supports require...

1. **High-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students**, differentiated to address students’ unique needs and enable access to grade-level content.

2. **Frequent data collection and monitoring** to identify students who need additional support, to adjust student groupings, and to inform instruction.

3. **Additional instructional time and targeted attention for students** who require more targeted and intensive support to address gaps in the foundational skills needed for accessing Tier 1 instruction.
Districts and schools can improve and differentiate **Tier 1 instruction** by investing in several key areas.

1. **High-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students**, differentiated to address students’ unique needs and enable access to grade-level content.

- High-quality instructional materials that are differentiated to address students’ unique needs and culturally responsive to students’ backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences.¹
- Professional learning that includes expert-led collaboration, as well as opportunities for observation and feedback. For more, see the *Professional Learning & Collaboration for Teachers* guide.
- Increased time supporting small groups — such as differentiated class sizes for prioritized grades/subjects, or flipped learning to prioritize just-in-time support during class. To see this in action, check out *our case study of Revere High School*.
- Literacy embedded across content areas to increase time students spend developing key literacy skills.³

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Sources: ¹EdReports; ²ERS; ³University of Kansas Content Literacy Continuum
Systems for **monitoring student progress** are essential for connecting students to additional support.

2. **Frequent data collection and monitoring** to identify students who need additional support, to adjust student groupings, and to inform instruction.

Increasingly, schools are implementing multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) that formalize processes for reviewing student data and identifying needed interventions.

For more information on establishing practices for monitoring progress and targeting interventions, see the *Early Warning Systems* guide.
This guide focuses on academic supports provided to students in addition to regular, Tier I instruction.

Effective academic supports require...

1. **High-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students**, differentiated to address students' unique needs and enable access to grade-level content.

2. **Frequent data collection and monitoring** to identify students who need additional support, to adjust student groupings, and to inform instruction.

3. **Additional instructional time and targeted attention for students** who require more targeted and intensive support to address gaps in the foundational skills needed for accessing Tier 1 instruction.
As a result of COVID-19, even more high school students will need additional academic supports, and these will need to be carefully designed to re-engage students.

COVID-19 disrupted high school students’ learning and impacted their mental health and social-emotional well-being.

- **Course failure rates** have increased dramatically, in part because many high school students took on additional responsibilities of caring for family members and supporting their family financially.\(^1,2\)

- A survey of 13-19 year-olds showed that about 25 percent of them felt **disconnected from school, adults, and classmates**.\(^3\)

- In Connecticut, **rates of chronic absenteeism** rose to almost 30 percent for students learning remotely, and were highest among Black and Latinx students\(^4\)

Sources: \(^1\)The 74, Associated Press, The Guardian, \(^2\)The 74, \(^3\)The State of Young People During COVID 19, \(^4\)The74

As a result...

- The number of students who need **additional supports** to access grade-level learning and stay on track to graduate has increased.

- Districts and schools need to find ways for high school students to **reconnect to school in ways that reaffirm their interests and identities** and avoids boring, repetitive work.
Research and emerging practices indicate some important elements of strong academic supports...

**High-Quality Curriculum**
Curriculum is an essential component of effective academic supports¹, yet students often don't have access to grade-level instruction or materials.²

**Alignment With Tier 1 Instruction**
Materials for additional support and intervention should be tied to strong Tier 1 curriculum or grade-level standards.³

**Normal Levels of Core, Grade-Level Instruction**
Intervention that replaces part of core, on-grade level instruction may be less effective.⁴

**Strong Relationships**
High school structures, such as high teacher loads and the number of different teachers a student interacts with, can make it challenging to form strong relationships among adults and students. But strong relationships are associated with a range of desired student outcomes⁵, including motivation to learn. For more, see the *Building Strong Relationships* guide.

**Sources:** ¹Ed Reports; ²TNTP; ³MA-DESE, Achieve the Core; ⁴Leveled Literacy Intervention for Secondary Students; ⁵EdWeek, NYU
Research and emerging practices also highlight the importance of **strategic scheduling**.

Strategic scheduling will enable:

**Regrouping Students Frequently**
Since students are typically enrolled in courses for at least one semester, schools will need to consider whether students can move in and out of additional supports flexibly as needed.

**More Heterogenous Groupings**
Schedules need to be carefully designed to enable students to receive targeted support while also prioritizing heterogeneous core courses that are academically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse.¹

**Keeping Students On-Track to Graduation**
Systems must consider how intervention provided through separate courses is credited so students can still meet graduation requirements.

Sources: ¹The Century Foundation, National Coalition on School Diversity
Districts and schools are exploring a **variety of academic supports**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>This looks like…</th>
<th>Current research is…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-Dosage Tutoring</strong></td>
<td>• See the Tutoring guide.</td>
<td>Promising¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Support Block</strong></td>
<td>• A schoolwide block for students to receive additional support, often in small groups.</td>
<td>Minimally studied&lt;br&gt;• Negative if students receive in place of core instruction², ³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Double-Dose Courses</strong> (typically math)</td>
<td>• Students with below grade-level math skills are enrolled in an additional math course with peers at similar skill-levels.&lt;br&gt;• Teachers receive additional professional development.</td>
<td>Nuanced&lt;br&gt;• Training, rigor, and peer grouping effects must be considered⁴, ⁵, ⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceleration Academies</strong></td>
<td>• Students participate in week-long small group classes over vacation breaks, led by strong teachers.</td>
<td>Promising⁷, ⁸</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While the structures above may vary in the evidence supporting them, the elements on the previous slides should guide design and implementation — for example, academic support blocks following those principles are likely to be effective.*

**Sources:**¹Ed Research for Recovery; ²Building Reading Proficiency at the Secondary Level; ³Leveled Literacy Intervention for Secondary Students; ⁴Consortium on Chicago School Research; ⁵EdWeek; ⁶Consortium on Chicago School Research; ⁷Schueler, Goodman, and Denning, as cited in EdResearch for Recovery; ⁸Reimagine Learning
How can districts and schools invest sustainably?
Federal stimulus funds provide an opportunity to address students’ current needs and build toward lasting improvement.

To plan ESSER investments with long-term sustainability in mind...

- **Size the full cost of implementing strategies over time.**
  Consider all the cost components associated with implementing the strategy well, including those that address intensified needs and those that build long-term capacity. Understand which costs will need to be sustained over time.

- **Plan out how spending and organization will shift to sustain critical investments over time.**
  To avoid fiscal cliffs, have an exit strategy where possible. Carefully monitor and plan for what needs to be sustained.

- **Invest in building bridges to new ways of organizing.**
  Pilot and evaluate new approaches that lower future costs or redirect resources to sustain this strategy.

- **Define success, measure, and adjust.**
  Investing in a continuous improvement system is critical for ensuring that strategies evolve and improve over time. For more on this, see Uncharted Waters.
Size the full cost of implementing strategies over time.

To invest sustainably, districts and schools will need to size the *full* cost of key components, such as flexible intervention blocks and double-dose courses.

- **Dedicated Time for Academic Support**
  How do we create sufficient time for additional support, minimizing tradeoffs?

- **Additional Staff for Academic Support**
  What new or existing roles are best suited to provide additional support and reduce group size?

- **Educator Professional Learning**
  What professional learning opportunities do educators need to plan and implement effective academic supports?

- **Educator Collaboration Time**
  What structures for collaboration do educators need for planning academic supports?

- **High-Quality, Aligned Materials**
  What additional materials are needed for academic supports?

- **Assessments and Monitoring Systems**
  How will we track student progress and the effectiveness of our academic supports?
ESSER investments should balance investing in immediate student needs with building lasting capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address intensified needs</th>
<th>Build system capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Time for Academic Support</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Staff for Academic Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator Professional Learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator Collaboration Time</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>High-Quality, Aligned Materials</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessments and Monitoring Systems</td>
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</table>

Investments in these areas increase the amount of academic supports but can also build capacity if made strategically. For example, piloting new roles or structures to provide additional time and attention.

Investments in these areas build the capacity of the system to be able to provide more effective academic supports for the long-term.
Illustrative investment needed

ESSER investments can enable significantly more time and lower group size for academic support in short term to address intensified pandemic-related needs. Systems need a plan to monitor what works and what is needed post-ESSER to meet ongoing levels of need.

**Key Question:** How can districts and schools sustain increased student supports and teacher collaboration — without increasing long-term costs?

ESSER supports increased investment in staff learning and collaboration to improve the quality and coherence of academic supports. Systems may want more collaboration time ongoing to sustain improvement.

Possibly reduce investments in these areas back to baseline once curriculum and monitoring systems are in place.
For now, schools might...

• Hire additional teachers/interventionists to offer additional courses and provide small group instruction.
• Stipend staff to meet after school and in additional professional learning days.
• Add staff to increase teacher release time to plan and coordinate supports.

...while piloting and evaluating ways to provide more and better academic supports, even without stimulus dollars.

• Pilot using lower cost roles such as teaching assistants and teacher residents as part of academic supports.
• Build partnerships with community organizations who can provide enrichment programming while teachers lead small group intervention.
• Explore shifts to funding systems that will increase staffing at higher-need schools. For example, reduce administrative staff to instead allocate interventionists based on students’ needs.
• Pilot ways to embed more staff collaboration time during the school day.
Districts and schools should invest in rapid cycles of continuous improvement to answer questions such as:

- Where are academic supports being implemented with fidelity? Where it’s not, what barriers are in place that we can address?
- Which schools are bright spots where academic supports are improving student learning and reducing the number of students who are failing courses? Which types of academic supports are most effective and should be implemented at other schools?
- What challenges are arising, and how can we address them?
- As more students are reaching grade-level achievement, how should we adjust our structures for academic supports?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A whole-system approach to continuous improvement...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes a clear set of priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowers practitioners with evidence-based strategies and logic models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assesses the fidelity and equity of implementation across the whole district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracks costs and compares them to the ROI of other potential approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relies on cross-functional system leadership to dismantle barriers, address inequities, and support schools</td>
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</table>

Districts and schools will need to monitor progress and learn from experience to plan and improve on future investments.
How can districts and schools target ESSER dollars now?
Investments in all components of targeted academic supports are strategic and allowable uses for ESSER dollars.

- Dedicated Time for Academic Support
- Additional Staff for Academic Support
- Educator Professional Learning
- Educator Collaboration Time
- High-Quality, Aligned Materials
- Assessments and Monitoring Systems

The CARES Act (ESSER I) includes allowable uses of funds related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19.

Note that the ‘additional’ LEA allowable uses of funds under the CRRSA Act (ESSER II), such as addressing learning loss, preparing schools for reopening, and testing, repairing, and upgrading projects to improve air quality in school buildings, already are permitted under the CARES Act.

-US Department of Education
Investments in targeted academic supports will vary across districts and schools based on **student and staff needs and context**.

**Dedicated Time for Academic Support**

**Additional Staff for Academic Support**

**Educator Professional Learning**

**Educator Collaboration Time**

**High-Quality, Aligned Materials**

**Assessments and Monitoring Systems**

For more support in estimating the **true cost** of implementing targeted academic supports sustainably in your specific **context**, see our ESSER Strategy Planner & Funding **Calculator**.

- This interactive tool allows you to see a breakdown of potential **ESSER spending** (SY 2021-22 – SY 2023-24) and the implied spending commitments post-ESSER (from SY 2024-25 and onward).

- For **targeted academic supports**, select the tab at the bottom labeled “#2 Time and Attention” and scroll left or right within the sheet to view the different strategies.
Districts and schools will need to invest in a variety of roles and find sufficient, dedicated time.

- **Dedicated Time for Academic Support**
- **Additional Staff for Academic Support**
- **Educator Professional Learning**
- **Educator Collaboration Time**
- **High-Quality, Aligned Materials**
- **Assessments and Monitoring Systems**

How do we find sufficient time for academic supports? How will we minimize trade-offs?

What investments in staff will be needed for these supports? Determining investments is an iterative process, including:

- Naming what combination of structures you will implement.
- Determine what additional staffing might be necessary to:
  - Lower group size in support blocks.
  - Release teachers for additional time to plan supports.
  - Extend time for students without increasing demands on teachers (such as after-school staffing or additional staff on staggered schedules).
- Determine the types of roles and estimate FTE for any additional needs.

See the “Scheduling & Staffing” section to explore options.

See our ESSER Strategy Planner & Funding Calculator to estimate staffing costs.
Districts and schools will need additional professional learning structures for educators.

What investments should be made in professional learning for educators?

- **Build in additional professional learning days** or provide stipends for teachers to attend professional learning throughout the year to build capacity to deliver effective academic supports — including potentially leveraging external or online professional learning. Targeted staff and content areas will vary depending on the types of academic supports being implemented.

- **Invest in professional learning and planning time for instructional leaders** (including teacher-leaders) to build capacity and plan for how to best support teachers.
Districts and schools will need **additional collaboration structures** for educators.

What investments should be made in collaboration for educators?

- **Create 90 minutes per week of content-focused, expert-led collaborative planning time** — for lesson planning and analyzing student data to inform responsive, data-driven instruction, including regrouping students based on their specific skills and needs. To be most effective, this time should be facilitated or supported by instructional experts such as trained teacher-leaders. Find blueprints for how to find the time in the *Professional Learning & Collaboration for Teachers* guide.

- The academic supports being offered should inform who meets to plan together. For example, if you are “double-dosing” with separate teachers for support classes, then the teachers of the primary and support classes should meet frequently to align on content and plan student supports.
**Continued:** Districts and schools will need **additional collaboration structures** for educators.

What investments should be made in collaboration for educators?

- **Create periodic longer blocks of teacher collaboration time** (for example, through early release days) every six weeks to every quarter. This time should be used to review student data, internalize and deepen teachers’ understanding of the curriculum, and plan upcoming units.
  - For flexible intervention blocks, this time should be used to figure out student groupings.

- **Create at least 90 minutes per month for Early Warning Systems (EWS) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) teams** to meet, discuss students’ needs, connect them to differentiated supports, and monitor progress. For more information about these types of collaboration structures, see [the Early Warning Systems guide](#).
Effective academic supports also require high-quality, aligned curricular materials.

- Dedicated Time for Academic Support
- Additional Staff for Academic Support
- Educator Professional Learning
- Educator Collaboration Time
- High-Quality, Aligned Materials
- Assessments and Monitoring Systems

Are materials in place for high-quality, targeted academic supports?

- Prioritize adopting a high-quality, Tier I core curriculum.
- Invest in materials for intervention that are aligned with core curriculum (or included).
- Purchase a technology-based program for students to use during intervention blocks, if needed.
Assessments and monitoring systems are needed to track students’ progress and evolve the approach.

What data do we need to collect to better target instruction?
- Track progress of students who receive academic supports.
  - Purchase and/or develop assessments to measure skill-specific student learning (see guidance from ANet). This could include:
    - Purchasing a core curriculum with formative assessments or having qualified district staff develop them.
    - Purchasing a universal screener and diagnostic assessments to identify students who need additional support, and the specific skills they need to work on.
    - Purchasing external interim assessments, such as MAP or STAR.
- Facilitate data collection and monitoring by integrating into existing data management systems.

What systems will we set up to continually improve our approach to academic supports?
- Build continuous improvement structures at the school- and/or district-level(s) to evolve practices and identify proof points.
What does strategic scheduling and staffing look like?
This guide will share concrete examples of staffing and scheduling models for **two approaches**.

**High-Dosage Tutoring**

See the *Tutoring* guide.

**Academic Support Blocks**

Concrete examples of staffing and scheduling models are included in this guide.

**Double-Dose Courses**

**Acceleration Academies**

See the following case studies of Lawrence Public Schools’ Acceleration Academies:

- From Harvard
- From Reimagine Learning
Academic Support Blocks

Scheduling and staffing for academic support blocks centers around three key decision points.

**Decision Point #1:**
Determine the desired structure of support blocks, including the level of student choice/flexibility.

**Decision Point #2:**
Find dedicated time for academic support blocks.

**Decision Point #3:**
Leverage staff and/or technology-based instruction to provide additional support and reduce group size.
Determine the desired structure of support blocks, including the level of student choice/flexibility.

There are two main considerations that shape the design of these blocks:

1. **What activities will take place during academic support blocks?**
   Options to consider include structured intervention groups, tutoring, teacher office hours — and other activities beyond academic support, such as counseling, enrichment opportunities, affinity groups, teacher collaboration, and study halls to focus on work completion.

2. **How much flexibility do students have to choose their activities during these blocks?**
   - **Less student choice/flexibility**
     Teachers assign students to groups based on data
   - **More student choice/flexibility**
     Students decide each block (often with support) based on what they need most.

(Learning Accelerator; Edficiency)
### Find dedicated time for academic support blocks.

#### To find time for flexible intervention...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add a standalone daily schoolwide period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If using a block schedule, then the intervention period is likely a “skinny” block, (for example, a shorter period than the course blocks, like four 90-minute course blocks and a 30-minute intervention period).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• This period can also be used for other purposes during the week, such as advisory two days per week and intervention three days per week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insert academic support blocks into lunch rotation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In the simplest case of two lunch periods, half the students are in lunch while the other half are in academic support blocks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• For three or more lunch periods, more complicated rotations are possible (for example, students attend two support blocks and one lunch, or include a class in a rotation of class-lunch-support block).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insert support blocks into a rotating drop schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For example, a schedule in which students enroll in seven courses but only take six rotating periods each day creates two additional periods during the week when intervention can take place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Source: RTI Network*
Continued:

**Academic Support Blocks Decision Point #2**

Find dedicated time for academic support blocks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To find time for flexible intervention...</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stagger staff arrival and departure to extend the school day and add enrichment to beginning and/or end of day | • Extends the day for students without extending the day for teachers by staggering the teacher day.  
• May create large group sizes for first and last periods, as fewer staff are available — community partners could support. |

Assign a separate class period of intervention for students who need it

• This structure is similar to double-dosing.

Source: RTI Network
**Academic Support Blocks Decision Point #3**

**Leverage staff** and/or technology-based instruction to provide additional support and reduce group size.

*Note: Schools implementing an intervention/enrichment block typically use an “all hands on deck” approach, in which most or all staff support small group intervention, tutoring, enrichment, or monitoring of a study hall for students not in another activity. The options below and on the next page describe ways to consider lowering group sizes in intervention groups.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To reduce group size...</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hire additional intervention teachers</strong></td>
<td>• This is likely the most <strong>expensive</strong> option, especially if hiring multiple interventionists to support all grade levels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Leverage ELL/special education teachers** | • Scheduling small group ELL or special education services during small group instruction blocks can ensure sufficient time in Tier 1 instruction, and supports **alignment between supplemental services and Tier 1 instruction**.  
• To extend their reach, special education teachers may be able to create small groups that **mix students** with and without IEPs. *Note: ONLY if locally allowed; in some districts, this may require moving away from a caseload definition of a special education teacher work day to a direct service definition.* |
| **Hire additional support staff** | • Support staff can supervise students who are doing independent or computer-based instruction, while teachers pull small groups. With **training, support, and accountability**, these staff can also facilitate small groups when structured materials are available (as is often the case in early literacy).  
• Can be temporary or **part-time staff** (see **Appendix** for note on part-time staff in this moment). |
**Continued:**

### Academic Support Blocks: Decision Point #3:

**Leverage staff** and/or technology-based instruction to provide additional support and reduce group size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To reduce group size...</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Leverage teacher residents** | • Teacher residents can **begin by supervising students** in Tier 1 who are doing independent work or computer-based instruction, and eventually facilitate small groups where appropriate and locally allowable.  
• Successful teacher residency programs give preservice and rookie teachers opportunities for **shelter and development**.  
• This approach requires **close collaboration** between mentor teachers and teacher residents. |
| **Work with community partners such as Citizen Schools or City Year** | • Community partners can supervise students in Tier 1 (such as by **providing additional enrichment**) or **provide tutoring** to students who receive Tier 2 & 3 supports.  
• This approach can provide **additional staff at scale**.  
• This approach can potentially enable an **extended school day** for all students. |
| **Leverage technology** | • Students can use adaptive platforms to address unfinished learning or access rich extensions, such as **edX**.  
• This can be helpful when leveraging **non-instructional staff** to monitor students not in small group interventions, while instructional staff are providing tiered support.  
• This approach can be used in combination with an **“all hands on deck” approach** where all available staff support small group instruction blocks. |
“Double-Dose” Courses

Scheduling and staffing for “double-dose” courses centers around three key decision points.

**Decision Point #1:**
**Choose a course structure** — whether the double-dose will be offered through a single, extended-time course or through one primary course and a separate, but coordinated, support course.

**Decision Point #2:**
**Determine staffing approaches** — whether students will have the same teacher for core instruction and double-dose courses.

**Decision Point #3:**
**Align crediting policies and schedule structures** — to ensure students stay on-track for graduation.
"Double-Dose" Courses Decision Point #1

Choose a course structure — whether the double-dose will be offered through a single, extended-time course or through one primary course and a separate, but coordinated, support course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combined</th>
<th>Separate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1</td>
<td>Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period 5</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period 6</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 7</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When determining whether to combine or separate the primary and support courses, consider the implications on:

- **Coherence**: A single block can make a more coherent experience and allows instructor to weave in support and grade-level material.

- **Tracking**: The single block approach means that students will be tracked for their full math instruction, whereas a separate support course allows for the primary course to be grouped heterogeneously (see next page for more).

- **Staffing**: The single block also likely has the same teacher for primary and support instruction (see Decision Point #2).
“Double-Dose” Courses Decision Point #1

Choose a course structure — whether the double-dose will be offered through a single, extended-time course or through one primary course and a separate, but coordinated, support course.

There are particular considerations for tracking in a double-dosing structure:

- Ability grouping, or tracking, is a frequently debated topic, with some studies showing that students in lower tracks typically have lower quality experiences.\(^1\)

- However, in studies of double-dosing in Chicago Public Schools, students with lower-performance who were in heterogenous (not tracked) and homogeneous (tracked) primary math classes had similar test score improvements.\(^2\)

- Researchers hypothesize that common impacts of tracking — such as lower expectations, less peer support, and lower quality instruction — were offset by common grade-level expectations for all, quality curriculum, training and support for teachers, and ability to better target instruction to the needs of the group.

- Therefore, schools should consider their context when deciding their grouping strategy, balancing the documented risks of tracking vs. targeting instruction to ensure equitable access to high-quality instruction.

Sources: \(^1\)NASSP; \(^2\)Cortes and Goodman (2014), Consortium on Chicago School Research;
“Double-Dose” Courses Decision Point #2

Determine staffing approaches — whether students will have the same teacher for core instruction and double-dose courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who teaches the additional course?</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Same teacher for core instruction and double-dose course | • Having the same teacher reduces **teacher loads** (fewer unique students taught), potentially enabling students and their needs to be more well known by their instructors.  
• Teachers can easily **align instruction** to the core course — and since teachers are familiar with students’ needs, they can more easily tailor instruction to focus on the most important skills and gaps, requiring less time for teacher collaboration.  
• Challenging from a scheduling perspective and can increase the chance of **tracking students** in their other courses. |
| Different teacher for core instruction and double dosage course | • Allows **greater specialization** — a teacher can focus on either the primary or support content.  
• Requires **more time for collaboration** since teachers need to be familiar with core content and understand what students in the additional course need to work on.  
• Can be **easier to schedule** and reduces the chance of tracking students in their other courses. |
“Double-Dose” Courses Decision Point #3

Align crediting policies and schedule structures — to ensure students stay on-track for graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How can students in support courses keep up with credit accumulation?</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit support courses with elective credit</td>
<td>• Where allowable, the algebra support course may be counted as elective or math credit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Consider a block schedule to increase number of courses per year | • Common block schedules enable students to complete eight courses a year, in contrast to most single-period schools, where students typically earn six or seven credits.\(^1\)  
• The additional credit opportunity allows students to take support courses while accumulating sufficient credits to stay on-track. |
| Consider a trimester calendar | • Trimester schedules allow for more courses during the year and increase flexibility — students can complete a support course in the first trimester (or the second trimester, based on performance in the first trimester) and then move to other credit-bearing classes.\(^2\) |

Sources: \(^1\)[AASA](https://www.aasa.org), \(^2\)[trimesters.org, UC Berkeley Grad. School of Ed.](https://www.trimesters.org)
The following pages show **concrete examples** of these decision points in action.
Example #1

Daily schoolwide block for intervention/enrichment and advisory.

**KEY DECISION POINTS**

- Schedule a 30-minute schoolwide block every day after first period. Students have intervention or enrichment 3x/week, and advisory 2x/week.
- Use an “all hands on deck” approach to reduce group size. All instructional staff available during this time to lead intervention groups, enrichment activities, monitor students in a study hall, or, on some days, lead advisory groups.

**KEYS TO SUCCESS**

- Support staff need additional training to lead small group instruction.
- Additional staff who support intervention/enrichment block are either part-time or have additional responsibilities within the school.
- Collaboration needed between teachers, special education teachers, and support staff to provide “just-in-time” support for core instruction, and strong systems and processes to regroup students according to need.

### Mon, Wed, Fri | Tues, Thurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period 1 (90 min)</th>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (30 min)</td>
<td>Interv. / Enrich.</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (120 min)</td>
<td>Class 3 / Lunch</td>
<td>Class 3 / Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued: Example #1

Daily schoolwide block for intervention/enrichment and advisory.

TRADEOFFS

- Small decrease in core instructional time to make time for intervention block.
- Some groups will have to be larger (ideally students in study hall or enrichment activities that do not need additional support) in order to reduce group size for intervention.

ALSO CONSIDER

- A similar approach would work with a traditional period (non-block) schedule by shortening period lengths slightly and adding a shorter intervention period between two class periods.

SEE HOW OTHER SCHOOLS APPROACH THIS

- The Jeremiah Burke School implements a daily intervention/block in their “4x4x1” schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Mon, Wed, Fri</th>
<th>Tues, Thurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (30 min)</td>
<td>Interv. / Enrich.</td>
<td>Advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (120 min)</td>
<td>Class 3 / Lunch</td>
<td>Class 3 / Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example #2

Intervention/Enrichment period in lunch rotation.

KEY DECISION POINTS

• In this case of two lunch periods, students have one as lunch and the other as their intervention/enrichment period.

• Staff have their duty-free lunch for one of the periods and run intervention, enrichment activities, or lunch duty (particularly support staff) in the other.

• As students are regrouped periodically into interventions based on shared-student collaboration meetings, they may be moved into a different lunch period to be available for their assigned intervention block.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

• Collaboration needed between teachers, special education teachers, and support staff to provide “just-in-time” support for core instruction, and strong systems and processes to regroup students according to need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Lunch Group</th>
<th>B Lunch Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch A (30 min)</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch B (30 min)</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued: Example #2

Intervention/Enrichment period in lunch rotation.

TRADEOFFS

- Small decrease in core instructional time to make time for intervention block.
- Depending on school culture, the period around lunch might be a less focused period in the day.

ALSO CONSIDER

- The intervention/enrichment block could be used as a flexible “What I Need” block. Students can determine, supported by their teachers/advisor, what support would be best during that block and sign up to attend office hours, structured intervention groups, or catch up on assignments in a study hall. One approach to these “flex” or “What I Need” blocks is described in depth by Edficiency.
- With three or more lunch periods, there are more complicated rotations. (See the example schedules at Edficiency.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Lunch Group</th>
<th>B Lunch Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch A (30 min)</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch B (30 min)</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example #3
Drop-rotation with intervention/enrichment block.

**KEY DECISION POINTS**
- Students are assigned seven courses. Each day, six of the courses meet in a rotation, allowing for slightly longer blocks and one fewer transition.
- With 30 blocks in the week and 28 periods needed for their seven courses to meet four times, there are two blocks remaining for intervention/enrichment in the week.
- The rotations create equal opportunity for classes to occur when students learn best and when teachers teach best.

**TRADEOFFS**
- The rotation creates some schedule complexity that staff, students, and families need to track.

### Scheduling & Staffing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period (60 min)</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Interv./Enrich</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 6 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example #4
Stagger teachers’ schedules to extend the day and add support blocks.

KEY DECISION POINTS
- Intervention/club periods are scheduled at the beginning and end of day. In order to not extend the teacher day, some start their day after the morning intervention block, while others end before the afternoon intervention/club block.

ALSO CONSIDER
- Depending on staffing levels, there may not be sufficient supervision for the morning and afternoon blocks without unreasonably large group sizes. Schools can offer staggered starts/ends to only a set of teachers (Achievement First Greenfield) or leverage community partners, such as City Year, for supervision of some students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Block</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>Teacher B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Interv./Club</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Off</td>
<td>Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 1 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Prep/Collab.</td>
<td>Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>Prep/Collab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4 (90 min)</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftern. Interv./Club</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, there are district-level enabling conditions that can help districts and schools sustain academic support strategies, even after the ESSER funding period.

- **Teacher-of-record policies** that encourage teaming and/or collaboration among experienced, rookie, and pre-service teachers.

- **Compensation policies** that enable pay to be based on differentiated roles and increased responsibilities.

- Ability to contract with third-parties — such as local organizations and community colleges — to provide tutoring or enrichment to enable teachers to pull out small groups.

- **Role Flexibility**

- **Schedule Flexibility**

  - The ability to develop schedules that take into account students’ needs, interests, and progress.

  - The flexibility to schedule long collaborative planning blocks during the school day for shared-content and shared-student collaboration among teachers and staff.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide was authored by Gayatri Mehra (Principal Associate), Eddie Branchaud (Manager) and Kristen Ferris (Partner). It is the result of collaborative efforts among numerous people, both within and outside of ERS. We would like to acknowledge the following ERS team members who contributed to this work: Crystal Chu, Mark Heath, Gloria Samen, Torrie Mekos, Daven McQueen, and Karen Hawley Miles.

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We are continually inspired by people in districts and schools across the country who engage in this difficult (yet rewarding) work each day.

We are grateful to all those listed above who inspired, informed, contributed, and reviewed this work.
For more tools and information...

See the full “Do Now, Build Toward” toolkit

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As your team weighs the possible tradeoffs associated with different approaches, makes decisions about how to organize resources, and plans for how to evolve and scale your approaches over time, we encourage you to adapt these guides to meet your unique needs and context.

To share your work or get help navigating your “Do Now, Build Toward” approach, contact us.
Appendix
Note: In this moment, hiring **part-time staff** may offer flexibility and options that strategies requiring additional, specialized, full-time staff may not.

- Enables **schedule flexibility** (for example, two part-time staff members can push into schoolwide intervention block or math intervention courses in the morning).

- Likely **more affordable** option, since part-time staff are working fewer hours and not specialized.

- Enables **concentrated expertise and lower caseloads** if the part-time staff is only responsible for a small number of students.

- Provides more **individualized attention and support** for each student to feel known by at least one adult given potentially lower caseloads.

- Allows for **hiring from a greater and non-traditional talent pool**, which is key in this moment given school staffing needs.

- Can be **added to existing structures or used in combination** with any of the other strategies.

- **Clear exit plan** as the need for additional academic supports and teacher collaboration time decreases.