Betting big on ESSER-funded Targeted Academic Support. An increasing number of high school students need academic supports, accelerated learning, and interventions 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 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.
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.

DO NOW, BUILD TOWARD

covid recovery | federal stimulus funding | long-term vision

Targeted Academic Supports: Context & Research

Strategic Scheduling and Staffing

Flex Block Approach

“Double Dose” Courses Approach

“No Do Now” Targeted Academic Supports Investments

Investing in Targeted Academic Supports Sustainably
Targeted Academic Supports: Context & Research
Effective design is critical; as a result of COVID-19, even more high school students will need additional academic supports.

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 students⁴

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.

Sources:

¹The 74, Associated Press, The Guardian, ²The 74, ³The State of Young People During COVID 19, ⁴The 74
Targeted academic supports are part of a set of foundational services that schools must provide for students.

**High-Quality Tier 1 Instruction**
...differentiated to address students’ unique needs and enable access to grade-level content.

Investments might include high quality instructional materials, supports for job-embedded professional learning and collaboration, or different ways of organizing time and staff to enable small group, just in time support. For more, see:

- The Professional Learning & Collaboration for Teachers guide
- Revere High School’s approach to flipped learning to prioritize time for differentiated tier 1 instruction.

**Frequent Data Collection and Monitoring**
...to identify students who need additional support, to adjust student groupings, and to inform instruction.

For more information on establishing practices for monitoring progress and targeting supports, see the Early Warning Systems guide.

**Targeted Academic Supports**
...in the form of additional instruction 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.

This guide focuses here
Targeted Academic Supports

This guide focuses on academic supports provided to students in addition to regular Tier I instruction.

Common structures for targeted academic supports include:
- High-dosage tutoring
- Flex block
- Double-dose courses
- Acceleration academies
Districts and schools are exploring a **variety of academic supports**, with varying levels of research behind them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>This looks like…</th>
<th>Current research is…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Dosage Tutoring</td>
<td>• See the <em>Tutoring guide</em>.</td>
<td>Promising¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex Block</td>
<td>• A schoolwide block for students to receive additional support, often in small groups.</td>
<td>Minimally studied • Negative if students receive in place of core instruction²,³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-Dose Courses</td>
<td>• Students with below grade-level math skills are enrolled in an additional math course with peers at similar skill-levels. • Teachers receive additional professional development.</td>
<td>Nuanced • Training, rigor, and peer grouping effects must be considered⁴,⁵,⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration Academies</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 slide should guide design and implementation — for example, flex blocks with those elements are more likely to be effective than flex blocks lacking them.*

**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
Regardless of the structures used for providing academic supports, research and emerging practices indicate some **important elements**

### 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 should be tied to strong Tier 1 curriculum or grade-level standards.³

### Normal Levels of Core, Grade-Level Instruction
Supports that replace 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.

### Strategic Scheduling
This will allow for regrouping students frequently, more heterogeneous groupings⁶, and keeping students on-track for graduation.

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Sources: ¹Ed Reports; ²TNTP; ³MA-DESE, Achieve the Core; ⁴Leveled Literacy Intervention for Secondary Students; ⁵EdWeek, NYU; ⁶The Century Foundation, National Coalition on School Diversity
Targeted Supports in Action: Strategic Scheduling & Staffing
This guide will share concrete examples of staffing and scheduling models for **two approaches to targeted academic support**.

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

- **Flex Blocks**
- **Double-Dose Courses**

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

- **From Harvard**
- **From Reimagine Learning**
These strategies may overcome common challenges leaders often face in providing academic supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Challenges</th>
<th>How Flex Blocks and Double-Dose May Overcome These Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| There is limited flexibility for supports in my current schedule - how do I build flexibility to support students within the school day? | • Flex blocks generally take place outside the current schedule’s constraints (with a tradeoff in minutes from current periods)  
• Double-dose courses are scheduled into an existing period of a student’s day                                                  |
| It’s tough to navigate staff assignments not clearly defined in the teacher contract | • Depending on how flex blocks are structured and framed, adding them may require special staff agreement.  
• Double-dose courses are assigned within the normal schedule and do not represent additional duties (though it may require staffing shifts, e.g., additional math sections in place of electives) |
| There is a limited supply of external partners for academic supports              | • Using an “all-hands-on-deck” approach allows for implementing flex blocks without relying on external partners.  
• Double-dose courses do not generally rely on external partners for delivery  
• Support blocks could be staggered throughout the day to leverage tutors across many students/classes |
| My students need to receive sufficient instructional hours to earn credits         | • Flex blocks can usually be added while preserving required minutes  
• Double-dose courses often award elective credits to students to support credit accumulation  
• Schedule types with more periods (e.g., 8 vs. 7 periods) can make more space for delivering supports like double-dosing while also prioritizing time for students to earn required credits |
School leaders can prioritize different aspects of the student experience by choosing different academic support strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the Student Experience</th>
<th>Create a Flexible “What I Need” Block</th>
<th>“Double-Dose” Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increases instructional minutes for certain subjects</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows for flexible use of time (academic intervention, project-based work, advisory, SEL, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives students agency in choice of supports</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varies length and frequency of supports</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces group size</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups students flexibly and frequently (based on grade, subject, performance levels)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides support without reducing opportunities for electives or credit accumulation</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets specific grades, subjects, and/or students</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains current bell schedule structure and does not require shortening existing periods</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Flex Blocks and Double-Dose Courses each have their own scheduling and staffing considerations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create a Flexible “What I Need” Block</th>
<th>Double-Dose Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a schoolwide <strong>Flex Block</strong> when all students can receive support in the <strong>areas needed most</strong></td>
<td>Offer <em>small group instruction or structured tutoring</em> as an elective-type option in place of study hall or other electives for <strong>some students</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scheduling**
- Academic support happens outside of existing periods
- Requires shortening or reducing number of periods and transition times
- Length and frequency of supports can vary
- Academic support happens during existing periods
- Requires repurposing an existing period for some students
- Length and frequency of supports are the same as other courses

**Staffing**
- Typically all-hands-on-deck
- May impact teacher utilization and number of preps defined in teacher contract
- Can leverage external partners to staff supports
- May require more staff if intending to reduce group size
- May impact teacher utilization and number of preps defined in teacher contract
- Can leverage external partners to staff supports

This guide will explore each of these considerations in detail.
Approaches to Academic Supports: Flex Blocks
District Example: At Northeast Early College in Denver Public Schools, students get the additional support and enrichment they need during a twice-weekly Flex Block

- **Who:** All students and all staff
- **What:** Flex Block when students have agency in which activities they participate in, like academic intervention and/or SEL support. Students choose one Flex Block activity on Tuesday and another on Thursdays
- **When:** 40 minutes, twice per week
- **How:** Students take all 7 courses on Mondays; on Wednesdays/Fridays students take 4 courses on a block schedule; on Tuesdays/Thursdays, students take the remaining 3 courses on a block schedule and have time for Flex Blocks and Community Time; Students are scheduled into Flex Blocks using Responsive Scheduling in Infinite Campus
- **Staffing:** As an innovation school, teachers have expanded duties which cover participation in Flex Block, in addition to other instructional duties

"After having the Flex Block for a few years, teachers really see its value and utilize the time for intervention for students who need more support. They don’t see it as a separate prep." – Stacy Parrish, Principal of Northeast Early College
Flex Blocks

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

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

Decision Point #2:
Find dedicated time for flex blocks.

Decision Point #3:
Leverage staff and/or technology-based instruction to provide additional support and reduce group size.
Flex Blocks Decision Point #1

Determine the desired structure of flex 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 flex blocks?**
   Options to consider include structured academic support 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)
## Flex Blocks Decision Point #2

**Find dedicated time for flex blocks.**

### Key Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To find time for flexible academic supports…</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Add a standalone daily schoolwide period     | • If using a block schedule, then the academic support period is likely a “skinny” block, (e.g., a shorter period than the course blocks, like four 90-minute course blocks and a 30-minute academic support period).  
  • This period can also be used for other purposes during the week, such as advisory 2x per week and academic support 3x per week. |
| Insert flex blocks into lunch rotation      | • In the simplest case of two lunch periods, half the students are in lunch while the other half are in flex blocks.  
  • For three or more lunch periods, more complicated rotations are possible (e.g., students attend two flex blocks and one lunch, or include a class in a rotation of class-lunch-flex block). |
| Insert flex blocks into a rotating drop schedule | • 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 academic supports can take place. |
| 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 academic support for students who need it | • This structure is similar to double-dosing. |

*Source: RTI Network*
Example #1
Add a standalone daily schoolwide period

KEY DECISION POINTS

• Schedule a 30-minute schoolwide block every day after first period. Students have academic support 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 academic support 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 flex block are either part-time or have additional responsibilities within the school.

TRADEOFFS

• Small decrease in core instructional time to make time for flex 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 academic support.

ALSO CONSIDER

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

SEE HOW OTHER SCHOOLS APPROACH THIS

• The Jeremiah Burke School implements a daily flex block in their “4x4x1” schedule.

• Anne Arundel County Public Schools implements a district-wide flex block for all their high schools.
Example #2
Insert flex block into lunch rotation

KEY DECISION POINTS

• With two lunch periods, students have one as lunch and the other as their flex block.
• Staff have their duty-free lunch for one of the periods and run small groups, enrichment activities, or lunch duty (particularly support staff) in the other.
• As students are regrouped periodically into small groups based on shared-student collaboration meetings, they may be moved into a different lunch period to be available for their assigned flex 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.

TRADEOFFS

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

ALSO CONSIDER

• With three or more lunch periods, there are more complicated rotations. (See the example schedules at Edficiency.)
Example #3
Insert flex blocks into a rotating drop schedule

**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 flex block 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.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></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>Flex</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>
</tbody>
</table>

Lunch

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 5 (60 min)</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Flex</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 staff arrival and departure to extend the school day and add enrichment to beginning and/or end of day.

**KEY DECISION POINTS**
- Flex 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 flex block, while others end before the afternoon flex 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></th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>Teacher B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Flex/Club</td>
<td>Flex</td>
<td>Off</td>
<td>Flex</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></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch</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>Afternoon Flex/Club</td>
<td>Flex</td>
<td>Flex</td>
<td>Off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Flex Blocks Decision Point #3

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

Schools implementing an academic support/enrichment block typically use an “all hands on deck” approach, in which most or all staff support small group instruction, tutoring, enrichment, or monitoring of a study hall for students not in another activity. The options here describe ways to consider lowering group sizes in academic support groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To reduce group size…</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire additional academic support teachers</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 workday 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.** |
| 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 (e.g., Citizen Schools, 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 supports, 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. |

**ESSER Guidance:** Targeted Academic Supports

Introduction  | Context & Research  | Scheduling & Staffing  | “Do Now” Investments  | Sustainability
Approaches to Academic Supports: Double-Dose Courses
District Example: In Chicago Public Schools, 9th grade students who received double-dose algebra classes showed significant positive effects on test scores and long-run outcomes.

- **Who**: All 9th graders who scored below the national median on the 8th-grade math exam
- **What**: Full-year algebra course and simultaneous algebra support class, usually taught by the same teacher
- **When**: Schools were initially advised to schedule algebra support consecutively with the full-year algebra course (single block structure), but this was not a requirement and did not appear to affect outcomes.
- **Staffing**: Teachers in the program received new curriculum to use – Agile Mind and Cognitive Tutor – and additional professional development. The professional development focused on using extra instructional time to promote complex thinking in math through student-centered instructional practices. The extra time enabled teachers to feel like they could take risks with new modes of instruction.
- **Results**: Students who received the double dose treatment showed larger gains in algebra scores – equivalent to about an extra quarter of a year of growth – and their algebra GPAs were about a quarter of a point higher. In the long-run, students who received double-dosing also saw improved math scores on the ACT taken in the spring of 11th grade, higher high school graduation rates, and higher college enrollment rates.
“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.

Note: Scheduling tutoring as a course is one flavor of double-dose courses. For more information on how to implement high-dosage tutoring, see our tutoring guide here.
“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.

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

- **Coherence**: A single block can be a more coherent experience and make it easier to integrate support and grade-level material.
- **Staffing**: The single block also likely has the same teacher for primary and support instruction (see Decision Point #2).
- **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.
  - 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.

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

Sources: ¹NASSP; ²Cortes 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-dose 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. |
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: ¹AASA; ²trimesters.org, UC Berkeley Grad. School of Ed.
“Do Now” Investments in Targeted Academic Supports
Targeted academic supports will require investment across multiple cost components.

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 find **sufficient, dedicated time** for targeted academic support.

- How do we find sufficient time for academic supports?
- What trade-offs are made with students’ and staff’s time through academic supports instead of other interventions or socio-emotional learning?

See the **“Scheduling & Staffing” section** to explore options.
Districts and schools will need to invest in a **variety of roles** for targeted academic support.

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.
- Determining what **additional staffing** might be necessary to:
  - Lower group size in flex 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 our **ESSER Strategy Planner & Funding Calculator** to estimate staffing costs.

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

- **Create periodic longer blocks of teacher collaboration time** (e.g., 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 support 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.

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

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

How can we use data 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 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.
Investing in Targeted Academic Supports Sustainably
Federal stimulus funds provide an opportunity to **address students’ current needs and build toward lasting improvement.**

To plan investments of one-time revenue infusions (such as ESSER) with **long-term sustainability** in mind…

- **Size the full cost of implementing strategies over time.**
- **Plan out how spending and organization will shift to sustain critical investments over time.**
- **Pilot and evaluate new approaches that redirect resources or lower future costs.**
- **Define success, measure, and adjust.**
Size the full cost of implementing strategies over time.

Consider all the cost components associated with implementing your strategy well.

- **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 in order 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?
Plan out how spending and organization will shift to sustain critical investments over time.

Investments should balance immediate student needs with building lasting capacity, while also being mindful of start-up vs. ongoing costs.

Some of the components of targeted academic supports are start-up costs that can be funded with one-time revenue. Other components are ongoing costs that need to be funded for the duration of the tutoring program.

One-time funding (e.g., ESSER) enables significantly more academic supports in the near-term to address immediate needs. Districts should monitor results and ongoing needs to plan ongoing investments.

“Even though we have multiple years of ESSER funds to support programs, we have a pending fiscal cliff. We have to use new money or reallocate existing spending for the programs we want to sustain over time.”

Matthew Stanski  
Director of Financial Operations  
Anne Arundel County Public Schools

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### ESSER Guidance: Targeted Academic Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address intensified needs</th>
<th>Build system capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated Time for Academic Support</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Ongoing cost</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Staff for Academic Support</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Start-up cost</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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.

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ESSER Guidance: Targeted Academic Supports

Introduction | Context & Research | Scheduling & Staffing | “Do Now” Investments | Sustainability
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 supports.
- 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.
Define success, measure, and adjust.

Use **continuous improvement cycles** to plan and improve on future investments.

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?

Click here to see [how Dallas ISD approaches continuous improvement](https://www.dallasisd.net/support) with one of its academic support strategies.

**A whole-system approach to continuous improvement...**

- **Emphasizes a clear set of priorities**
- **Empowers practitioners with evidence-based strategies and logic models**
- **Assesses the fidelity and equity of implementation across the whole district**
- **Tracks costs and compares them to the ROI of other potential approaches**
- **Relies on cross-functional system leadership to dismantle barriers, address inequities, and support schools**

ERS, Uncharted Waters
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To share your work or get help, contact us.

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