



Respectful, Responsible, Safe & Prepared

ESSER III STAKEHOLDER MEETING

January 31, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.

Waupaca High School Community Room and [Live Stream](#)

Present in the WHS Community Room:

Ron Saari, Sandy Lucas, Mark Flaten, Carl Hayek, Laurie Schmidt, Steve Thomaschefskey, Michael Werbowsky, Jenifer Erb, John Erspamer, Jody Pankratz, Carrie Naparalla, Sandy Robinson; and School Board members Stephen Johnson, Dale Feldt, Steve Klismet, Patrick Phair, and Mark Polebitski (via phone).

Welcome:

District Administrator Ron Saari began the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and advised that this meeting of the stakeholders is required for the ESSER III planning and turned the meeting over to Director of Teaching and Learning Mark Flaten.

ESSER III Presentation to the Community:

Mr. Flaten advised that the purpose of this meeting is to provide information and gather feedback from the community regarding how best to utilize the approximately \$2.4 million the District is set to receive through the ESSER III grant. The District needs to submit its proposed plan to DPI by March 11, 2022. He added that the suggestions made in this presentation are based on the Strategic Plan, emphasizing the Finance, Facilities, and Operations pillar of the Strategic Plan. In addition, all of the dollar amounts presented are estimates.

Mr. Flaten advised that 20% of the \$2.4 million (\$480,000) must be spent on strategies to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based interventions. He also advised that the District will probably not receive any increase in state funds over the next two years, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is estimated to be around 4%, and other expenses will increase approximately 4%. This results in an approximate -\$240,000 shortfall over the next two years. Mr. Flaten advised that this shortfall can be made up by following the guidance set in our Strategic Plan.

Mr. Flaten outlined several ideas that the Administration is vetting in order to address the academic impact of COVID-19 using the \$480,000 as required. He advised that the main goal for all learners is in our Mission Statement. This can be accomplished by continuing to invest in our staff by providing additional resource training for our teachers during the school year as well as expanding new teacher onboarding days.

Mr. Flaten then reviewed key data points relating to each of the four schools in the District, highlighting that attendance has been challenging for both staff and students, which has impacted student achievement levels. However, the District's learning expectations have not changed. He also shared the i-Ready fall and winter reading and math data points for the

CEC, WLC, and WMS, which indicate that the District has a greater number of students who are struggling, but the numbers are trending to the positive. Mr. Flaten reminded everyone that student data comes from a variety of sources and the District needs to use student data effectively to help our teachers know where students are struggling.

Mr. Flaten also suggested additional ways of investing in our staff and their estimated annual costs, which results in a -\$250,450. The additional funds could come from our processes outlined in our Strategic Plan such as through attrition of staff and reviewing every open position. He added that the hiring of any new positions would be on a two year, nonrecurring basis.

Mr. Flaten advised that the remainder of the ESSER III dollars (approximately \$1.92 million) would be spent on CPI required wage increases, as well as increased costs for health care, technology, utilities, general operational expenses, etc., keeping in mind that this is just a one time influx of money. He also advised that the District could possibly claim certain budgeted maintenance and/or technology infrastructure dollars via the ESSER III grant to help cover the increased costs of salaries, etc. However, he added that we have to be mindful of how we spend the ESSER III dollars because there are restrictions on how those funds can be spent.

As is required in order to receive the ESSER III funds, Mr. Flaten advised of the meetings that have already taken place and those that are scheduled during the month of February. He reiterated that the last day to submit the District's plan to the DPI, who is the overseer of the ESSER III grant, is March 11, 2022.

Community Feedback:

Sandy Robinson:

Mrs. Robinson commented that the District's Mission is realized every day for every student. She then suggested three options for the District to consider:

1. To make it a practice to hire substitutes for those teachers who help the students with the greatest needs, such as Title I teachers (or at least volunteers to provide assistance).
2. Because of absences required for quarantining, the District should invest in further developing the option of providing online instruction, and possibly work with the CESA 9 virtual school network. To help in accomplishing this the District could hire staff (substitutes) to be virtual teachers so the additional burden of providing online instruction wouldn't fall on the classroom teacher.
3. Do something similar to what Milwaukee Public Schools is doing – provide each school with \$100,000 to use as they see fit with broad guidelines.

She added that she appreciated the forum for public comment at tonight's meeting.

Patrick Phair:

In response to Mr. Phair's question, Director of Business Services Carl Hayek advised that the ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been spent. Mr. Phair advised that he learned at the WASB State Education Convention that only 90% of the federal ESSER funds that came to Wisconsin have been distributed, leaving 10% that will be coming to the State of Wisconsin, but they cannot be used for budget shortfalls. In addition, he stated that 20% is just the

minimum to address the academic impact, the District could go to 25% for example if it wanted to. Mr. Flaten emphasized that the additional 10% will have different requirements attached and is subject to change.

In response to Mr. Phair's inquiry, Mr. Flaten advised that the District has to submit a budget for approval first before anything can be submitted for reimbursement. Mr. Hayek added that the reimbursement of funds could take a month to receive, and if the DPI doesn't like a claim, they will make us go back and correct it and resubmit it.

Mark Polebitski:

Mr. Polebitski questioned the curriculum cost of \$109,000. He believed the Board and Administration had talked about this before ESSER III, and the Board was told that the summer curriculum was in the budget. He is wondering why the \$109,000 that was previously thought to be absorbed in the budget was not and now it is coming out of the ESSER III funds. Mr. Flaten advised that the Administration knew at that time that ESSER III funds were coming. He added that regarding increasing the rate, we could absorb that into the budget but not the overall curriculum writing – that was for ESSER III funds.

Mr. Polebitski was not pleased that he believed the Administration seemed to be spending the money before we knew we had it. But Mr. Flaten argued that we anticipated ESSER III would be coming and the Administration knew we would be able to spend it on curriculum writing. Mr. Hayek added that there is more room to do more with ESSER III funds.

Mr. Polebitski commented that with regard to the 20% or \$480,000, to him it seems as though that money has already been spent. He added that he feels the time frame is too short to make these decisions and doesn't like being put in this position.

Dale Feldt responded that he remembers talking about this since October, and has seen this presentation the last couple of Board meetings.

Mr. Polebitski stated that we've talked about ESSER I and ESSER II but not ESSER III funds. He advised that he has no problem with what the District is recommending to spend it on, but he does have a problem with what he views is a moving target – the target of items is moving. He asked if the Board is supposed to just “rubber stamp” what Administration is proposing as he feels the Administration is all of a sudden pushing this on the Board to get this completed by March 11th. Stephen Johnson advised that we will have that Board dialogue.

Mr. Flaten reminded everyone that the Administration has been talking about a “Portrait of a Graduate” for the last several months. He advised that the District has only 90 days from when the State approved its plan to submit the District's plan.

Notice to Stakeholders:

Mrs. Robinson stated that she was surprised that she was the only member of the general public in attendance. She thought other groups were supposed to attend, such as students, families, and others, and was wondering if there were going to be any additional meetings.

Mr. Saari responded that there was the hearing held in January and then tonight's meeting. Mrs. Robinson inquired as to perhaps there are other modalities that could be used.

Steve Klismet stated that he was in attendance at tonight's meeting as a parent of students in the District as well as a business owner in the community. He added that people just don't have the time to attend meetings, especially if they are long.

Mr. Johnson added that he had hoped for more participation and asked if the District sent out surveys. Mr. Flaten responded that the School Perceptions survey was sent but it was not specific to utilization of the ESSER III funds.

Mrs. Robinson reiterated that the District should think about other ways to reach out to people -- that more than one modality should be used including phone calls.

Mr. Feldt commented that this has not been a one month event. This has been discussed since September/October and we have to go with what we know. The notice of this meeting was in Mr. Saari's weekly message and is being live streamed tonight. He reiterated that he has seen the presentation four times. He believes that if people have an opinion they will call. This has been discussed in October, November, December, January, and will be again at the Wednesday Finance Committee meeting and the February 8th meeting.

Mrs. Robinson agreed that there have been a lot of meetings, but added that just because people haven't spoken up doesn't mean that they agree.

The meeting ended at approximately 6:30 p.m.