

Teachers Association of Lee County
6830 International Center Boulevard
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239.275.TALC
www.islandcoastfea.org/talc



Dr. Angela Pruitt
Chief Human Resources Officer
Lee County School District
2855 Colonial Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33966

July 26, 2021

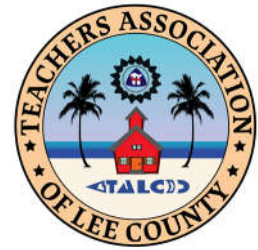
Dr. Pruitt,

I am writing you on behalf of the Teachers Association of Lee County (TALC), representing over 3300 educators, as the District undertakes the crucial work of planning for the allocation of American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds.

Collaboration with and reliance upon the expertise and invaluable perspective of the educators who serve our students day in and day out, is essential to effective planning and was reflected in the [U.S. Department of Education's guidance to state commissioners](#) and grant guidance calling "educators and their unions, should be an essential component of the process."

As such, please consider this letter as a demand to include TALC in the planning and oversight of programs with ARP ESSER funds, including but not limited to, collective bargaining impacts to terms and conditions of employment, opportunities for advance review and comment on draft plans in advance of implementation, etc.

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As you are aware, the receipt of ARP ESSER funds is conditioned on the District developing and making publicly available on its website a plan for safe in-person instruction and continuity of services. The District is required as part of this process to seek public comment on this plan and to take those comments into account. See ARP Sections 2001(i)(1) – (2). Meaningful engagement and participation in planning by teachers and staff is essential to building trust and ensuring the best possible allocation and use of resources and the highest degree of support for students.

As you may know, the Florida Department of Education has certified to the U.S. Department of Education that it will comply with the maintenance of equity provisions in Section 2004(b) of the ARP and that it will ensure that all local school districts comply with their maintenance of equity obligations in Section 2004(c) of the ARP. We urge you to strictly comply with these statutory requirements and to commit to using these federal emergency funds to address the unprecedented challenges our schools face, particularly in communities that have been the most severely impacted both by the pandemic and underlying, longstanding inequities. As an organization representing the educators who have been on the frontlines throughout this crisis and on behalf of the students they serve, TALC will continue to advocate for accountability and transparency in the allocation of funds.

Given the disastrous impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on students and schools, there are a multitude of opportunities to use ARP ESSER funds to assist in addressing these concerns. For example,

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- Increase staffing to make abundant use of small-group learning the norm. This will increase time on task, allow for personalized instruction and feedback, and enhance relationship building during the regular school day and in extended learning settings.
- Establish professional learning priorities through collaborative partnerships between TALC and management.
- Allocate funds to address additional workload if the need arises for increased class sizes or taking on additional classes. Changes in working conditions must be negotiated with TALC.
- Commit federal funds to support job-embedded professional learning that applies to all school professionals and codifies expectations for professional development (and a learning environment) that centers around student success.
- Tailor and differentiate professional learning based on student data and school quality analysis to meet the needs of educators to improve student learning.
- Allocate funds to offset COVID-related costs to the health insurance fund to help prevent premium increases for employees.
- Allocate funds to allow instructional staff to purchase additional classroom supplies so that each student has his or her own materials.

We look forward to working with you to ensure prudent, effective allocation of these funds to provide safe and equitable schools for all students. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

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Sincerely,

Kerr Fazzone

Kerr Fazzone, Ph.D.

Chief Negotiator, Teachers Association of Lee County
Service Unit Director, Island Coast FEA

Cc: Kevin Daly, TALC President
Dr. Kenneth Savage, Superintendent
Debbie Jordan, Board Chairman
Will Rothenberg, Director, Compensation and Labor Relations
Dr. Jeff Spiro, Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Ami Desamours, Chief Financial Officer
Kathy Dupuy-Bruno, Esq., Board Attorney