



June 9, 2022

Dear HJT1 Families and Staff,

I want to take a moment to respond to some of the information from the Fox 6 news story which aired on Wednesday evening. I have received some questions and want to take this time to provide you with some clarifications, especially about how ESSER funds were used in our District.

How were the District ESSER funds approved?

- The ESSER funds were budgeted for, and allocated, following the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction guidelines and Federal Government guidelines.
- The funds were used to create a comprehensive 2021-22 back-to-school plan.
- It is required that a portion of allocations is dedicated to learning recovery and aligned to evidence-based strategies, including family engagement.

If you are interested in learning more, the District's ESSER III Funding Plan is public on the website: <https://www.hjt1.org/curriculum-instruction/esser-iii-funding-plan>

Was Ms. Smits Paid \$130,000?

The story alluded that the District paid \$130,000 to Cindy Smits for her role as a District Community Coordinator.

- This is inaccurate. Ms. Smits was paid \$36,841 for a short-term contract with CESA 6 consisting of 101 days of service from January-June, 2022.
- The \$130,000 referenced in the story was the initial budget for a two-year, full-time position. This was presented to the Board in November and was a not-to-exceed total estimate to be used for budgeting purposes.

What was the role of the District Community Coordinator?

The District Community Coordinator position serves as a liaison between schools and families with the goal of making personal connections with families. Coordinator outreach included one-on-one discussions with families about their child's individual learning paths, areas of concern, opportunities for growth and/or enrichment, and for additional support from school staff.

How did the District's use of ESSER funds impact kids?

ESSER Funds were used to implement evidence-based strategies to address learning loss. The District used funds to develop programs that we know make a difference for kids. These included extended learning opportunities outside of school hours such as Power Hour at Lincoln, Rossman, and Central; Read to Succeed for English Language Learners; and Summer School.

What results has the District seen?

Our overall goal is to grow all kids. As a result of our district-wide efforts this past school year, our data shows that our students have grown in the areas of math, reading, and language arts. As a whole, we are pleased with the results; however, we certainly understand that there is room for continued growth and improvement.

Please know that we are striving to be proactive and we plan to reset for next year. We are working over the summer to prepare for the new school year and to ensure that our staff, students, families, and community have the best experience possible.

My door is always open if you have any questions. I wish you a wonderful summer and hope you have time to relax, recharge and enjoy the summer with your friends and family.

Yours in Education,
Mark Smits, Ph.D.