

Winston-Dillard Fills Its Halls with Sound of Music Thanks to ESSER III Funds

ESSER funding provided a unique opportunity for school districts nationwide to improve schools that would enhance the experience for our students in various ways. During the pandemic, students began to show the effects of distance learning. Many exhibited unfinished learning, social and emotional impacts, mental health issues, and other complications arising from their learning being disrupted by the pandemic.

At Winston-Dillard, we approached this challenge and the increased emergency funding as an opportunity to provide for our students in ways we have never been able to. In our district, over 62 percent of our students are experiencing poverty. We sought feedback from our stakeholders on what would be most impactful for students, improve their educational experience, and reinforce equity within our school system and music program.

We tried to avoid using ESSER funds purely for staffing because they are not sustainable. These funds expire in 2024, so we looked for ways to use these funds in harmony with the Student Investment Account to increase our support for students and offer new experiences that inspire students to attend and succeed in school. Our music instructors created an extensive plan to improve our district music program leading to increased equity in the district, higher rates of student success in music, and the ability to navigate the pandemic by having musical instruments available for students even if they were in comprehensive distance learning.

Our vision to expand music to every interested student in the district included the construction of two buildings that would provide much-needed space for band and music programs. This facility upgrade freed up space that will eventually be used to expand classrooms and lower-class sizes in the district. We allocated over \$127,000 of ESSER funds to provide new instruments for students, repair instruments in poor condition, and make other improvements that would help grow our music program and broaden the horizons of our students.

While the pandemic has challenged us in ways we could never have imagined, it also provided the ability to change the experience for students in our system. Our enhanced music program, which will impact students for decades to come, is a powerful example of utilizing ESSER funds to change the narrative in our district while expanding equity for all students.

Submitted by Kimberly Kellison, Superintendent of Winston-Dillard School District.

Caption: Middle school students at Winston-Dillard district enjoy trying out their new instruments purchased using ESSER III funds.



