

SUCCESS STORY: Prince George's County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*



Arts Education + ARP and ESSER

This is the second in a series of success stories about how arts organizations, states, schools and other entities are using funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) to support arts education.

Introduction

Located just outside Washington, D.C., Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is one of the nation's 20th largest school districts. The district has 208 schools and centers, including visual and performing arts centers, more than 136,500 students and nearly 20,000 employees. The school system serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. In December 2021, Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica Goldson unveiled a \$2.6 billion proposed budget for fiscal year 2023 with a focus on educational and operational improvement for PGCPS through transformation, equity and innovation. PGCPS currently serves students from pre-K through 12th grade. The current operating budget includes a per pupil expenditure range of \$16,322 to \$20,788. PGCPS is the recipient of over \$501 million in Maryland's American Rescue Plan (ARP) and [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief](#) (ESSER) funding and the Office of Strategic Initiatives oversees this implementation.

We are currently in a pivotal turning point in our society and public education. The district reaffirmed its commitment to educational excellence in the new strategic plan, [Transformation 2026: Equity & Excellence](#). This plan guides the decisions, priorities, resources and work of the school system over the next five years. Outcome Goal 1 is to "Attain educational excellence by providing every PGCPS student with a premier education characterized by innovative, relevant, and accessible learning and development opportunities that build 21st century competencies." The arts are imperative, critical partners in this work.

"Foundational to the outcome goal of educational excellence is this strategic imperative, PGCPS must re-imagine teaching and learning in non-traditional ways to meet and inspire the needs of a dynamically changing community of learners – continuing to set high expectations and ensuring every student, in every grade, receives rigorous, engaging and relevant instruction that prepares students to be college-, career-, and life-engaged."

SUCCESS STORY: Prince George's County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*

The goal is that all students in PGCPS will be global citizens, communicators, critical thinkers, creative & innovative thinkers and goal-directed learners.

In 2021, central office departments were asked to create lists of the items needed, an explanation for the need, and the connection to *Transformation 2026*. This funding has allowed the fine arts department to think about ways to expand arts access in ways that had not been possible before. In the past, previous budgets did not allow for resets in the forms of large-scale purchases. Instead, purchases had to be made in smaller amounts over time. The ESSER leads for the Department of Creative and Performing Arts continue to meet monthly with the larger ESSER implementation group to share the successes and challenges of implementing these large-scale projects. Supply chain issues have been one such barrier. PGCPS is an extremely large school system, so adding new vendors, getting quotes, ironing out distribution processes, labeling instruments and technology, all take a long time to implement. The Department of Informational Technology assisted with the management and distribution of iPads and iMacs and the Office of Supply Services assisted with instrument distribution. While these departments have worked collaboratively with the Department of Creative and Performing Arts in the past, these were much larger scale projects that needed multiple meetings both pre- and post-implementation to work on logistical details.

iPad Pro/iMac Program: Project Creativity

The PGCPS Fine Arts Office used ESSER funds to purchase several thousand iPad Pros with an Apple pencil and keyboard and newly updated iMacs. During the pandemic, students could not use Chromebooks to access Adobe Creative Cloud software from home. As a result, a request was made to use these new funds so that students could create art and



One art teacher designed this creative background for each iPad so they can be identified quickly as part of the program.

access the industry standard software from anywhere, not just inside the four walls of a computer graphics lab. In February 2022, 765 iPads were ordered and in summer 2022, an additional 1710 iPads and 1224 iMacs were purchased to update the technology in all computer graphics programs, career and technical education programs and media arts programs.

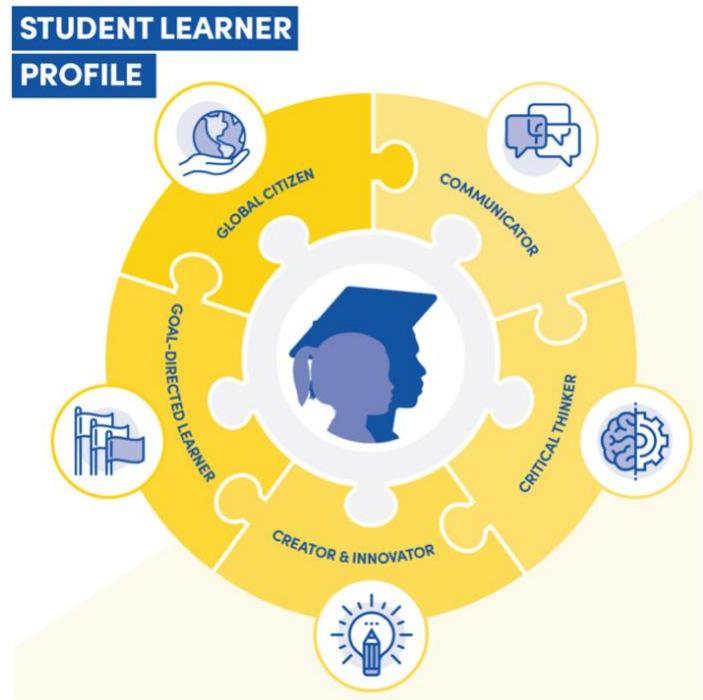
SUCCESS STORY: Prince George’s County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity* and Instrument Refresh

Additionally, 1,200 more iPads were purchased in fall 2022 for digital photography students. In total, *Project: Creativity* cost a little over \$6 million for all 24 of our high schools.

Beginning level professional development was provided for all teachers new to using iPads and additional professional development is currently in the planning stages. Ongoing data is being collected, including several student and teacher surveys. The data will be used to inform decisions around teacher training and professional development. Over 8,000 Adobe licenses and other necessary creative software, like Procreate and Final Cut Pro, were purchased so that PGCPs students can create from anywhere. In a recent classroom visit, an art teacher noted that student production has gone way up because they can create beyond school hours. With the integration of iPads and iMacs in the classroom, students are seamlessly able to switch to Mac and back in seconds which creates a faster workflow. Representatives from Apple and Adobe have come to visit this program in action.

iMacs 2018	900
iMacs 2023 replaced	1,200

Having these upgraded resources allows our students to have a competitive edge when entering college and careers. Part of PGCPs’ strategic plan is the [Student Learner Profile](#), which describes the attributes and skills we want for all students to thrive in a dynamic, complex, global community. We believe these attributes are as important for our students as their learning of core academic content to ensure they are ready for their futures. By using these new devices, our students will have the creative background to work in industries where creative thinkers are a necessity. With new technologies being invented by the minute and assistive technologies such as ChatGPT and Bing Chat, skills that harness human creativity and innovation will be vital for our students as they enter the workforce. With the guidance of Apple and Adobe, we plan to work on a professional development plan for all teachers so they can get to know each device and the amazing art



SUCCESS STORY: Prince George's County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*

that can be created with them. This plan will leverage already existing professional development such as the [Apple Education Community](#) (Apple Teacher, Apple Distinguished Educations, Apple Coaches), and the [Adobe Education Exchange](#), to support our staff moving forward.

Instrument Refresh

ESSER funding for instrumental music first provided additional instruments during the outbreak of COVID-19 for students who were sharing their school-based instrument with another student in different class periods. Typically, this was for our larger instruments such as cellos, string basses, tubas, etc. Since students at that time were learning from home, many did not have access to larger instruments. ESSER funding allowed us to purchase instruments so students could avoid sharing due to COVID-19 concerns as well as allowing students to have their own dedicated instrument for home practice and school performance use.

ESSER funding also increased technology access for all instrumental music students by providing music tools like SmartMusic and Music First for home and school use. Equitable access that the funding supported allowed every student to have their own account to continue virtual musical instruction in things like music theory, listening, ear training and performance. It also allowed students to choose music from an expanded list of musical titles and genres not previously available to them.

Since we are a one-to-one district where every student has a Chromebook, our instrumental music students have direct access to software, which does not require additional hardware. This was integral in keeping instruction moving forward during the pandemic because students were able to search and view music selections that may have only previously been available as a hardcopy from their music teacher. Since students were not in school at that time, they were able to stay engaged by practicing an electronic version of the music. Music teachers could also assign students individual music that was tailored to the student's performance abilities from a distance. The software provided real-time feedback of the student's playing which allowed the teacher to assess and make adjustments without having to be physically present. While this is not the ideal approach in teacher-to-student or teacher-to-ensemble performance interactions, it did allow continuation of instruction.

The second tier of ESSER funding came later to allow the district to begin replacing its older and obsolete inventory of instruments and to provide more access to all students. The district has seen an increase of more students requesting school-owned instruments over families renting their own. Supplying additional and various sized instruments that were not previously provided, continues to allow students to choose what they are interested in playing.

SUCCESS STORY: Prince George’s County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*

Recently, the department was allocated \$2.1 million dollars of ESSER funding to aggressively impact and lower the average age of an instrument loaned out to students. Each school was given a set budgeted amount based upon the type of school it is (elementary, middle, high, Title 1, etc.), whether it offered band and/or orchestra, and the size of the program. This allows every school with an instrumental music program the ability to purchase several much-needed new instruments to replace or add to current school inventories.

New Instruments Delivered So Far	1,339
Woodwinds (Flute, Clarinets, Saxes)	970
Low Brass (Trombone, Baritones, Tuba)	339
Strings (Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass)	1075
Percussion (Bells, Bass Drum, Timpani, Xylophone, Marimba, Vibraphone, etc.)	147

The ability to not only replace outdated instruments but increase the number of available instruments to students with financial need is paramount. Over half of the district's 12,000 instrument inventory are over 16 years old, with some instruments dating back to the 1950s. 2007 was the last time the instrumental music department was able to secure significant funding to purchase a large quantity of instruments. It is estimated that we will acquire 3,000 new instruments from this funding. This will reduce the amount of time students are without an instrument due to repairs or replacement. This also ensures that students are playing on safe, quality instruments that will have a new life span to last them through their time in our schools!

Conclusion

As the funding is coming to an end, departments are thinking about what comes after ESSER, and considering questions like:

- What programs do we keep?
- What does PGCPs need to pay for?
- How do we maintain what has been accomplished so far?
- What is our longevity plan?
- Where will future funding come from?

The thrill of new technology and equipment is exciting for teachers and students. But what happens when the funding is gone? The Department of Creative and Performing Arts in

SUCCESS STORY: Prince George's County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*

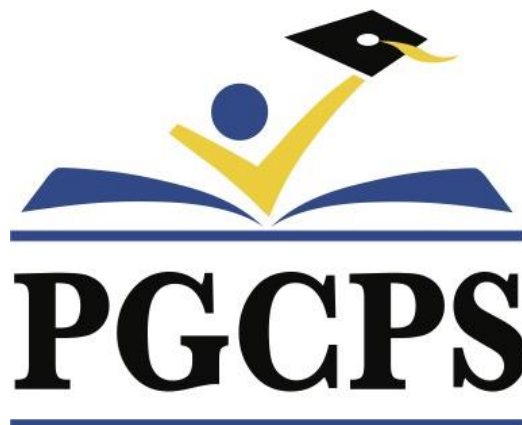
PGCPS has already begun to think about a sustainable plan for the future. It is possible that a lease purchase plan to update the technology every four years may work. This will allow the chief financial officer (CFO) to plan out the same budget each year rather than incur one lump payment. A similar lease purchase plan is being considered for instruments and the department is working on a pilot program. It was extremely helpful that the PGCPS CFO was fully integrated into the ESSER funding process, and that there have been open conversations with staff to determine the allocation of funds. The relative predictability of future equipment costs, the collaboration among Creative and Performing Arts staff and the CFO, and model purchasing plans provide the building blocks for sustainability in PGCPS.

Acknowledgements

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Prince George's County Public Schools Located just minutes away from Washington, D.C., Prince George's County offers easy access to the nation's political, cultural and entertainment center. The vibrant Washington corridor boasts historical sites and museums, top universities and colleges, and a high quality of living.

The Board of Education works to advance student achievement through community engagement, sound policy governance, accountability and fiscal responsibility. The school system's highest priority is to prepare students to meet the demands of college and careers.



SUCCESS STORY: Prince George's County Public Schools: *Project: Creativity and Instrument Refresh*

About AEP Success Stories

The Arts Education Partnership at Education Commission of the States is a national network of more than 100 organizations dedicated to advancing arts education. AEP has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education since 1995 and is administered by Education Commission of the States. AEP is the nation's hub for arts and education leaders, building their leadership capacity to support students, educators and learning environments. Through research, reports, convenings and counsel, leaders gain knowledge and insights to ensure that all learners — especially those that have historically been marginalized — receive an excellent arts education. To achieve its goal to expand access to high-quality arts learning opportunities for all learners, AEP gathers detailed information on success stories with the potential to be replicated in communities across the country.

The Success Stories project collects submissions from organizations that highlight successful arts education programs. These stories demonstrate the benefits of arts education and promote continued collaboration and learning for individuals and organizations working toward student achievement and success. This story is part of a new initiative that highlights how arts organizations, schools, states, and other entities across the country are using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to support and expand access to arts education.

Are you interested in sharing your arts and restorative justice work for a future success story? Please reach out to AEP Assistant Director, [Mary Dell'Erba](#), to share your story.

