



## Post-ESSER Strategies: Keeping Your School's 1-to-1 Device Program

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TECH DEFENDERS

The widespread adoption of 1-to-1 device deployments in public schools started back in the late 1990s, but it became nearly universal during the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures required immediate and innovative solutions, and by 2021, nearly 90% of U.S. middle and high schools had implemented 1-to-1 programs.[1]

Federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program played a critical role, providing \$112 billion to support technology and other initiatives.[2] However, as of September 30, 2024, these funds have expired and school districts now face significant financial pressures to maintain their 1-to-1 device programs, which have become essential for educational continuity.

## Why 1-to-1 Device Programs Still Matter

Classrooms equipped with individual devices offer personalized, engaging learning experiences. They allow students to explore digital resources, collaborate on projects, and explore concepts at their own pace and as part of an Individual Learning Plan—an approach that resonates well with today's digitally native students.

### Key benefits of 1-to-1 deployments include:

- **Increased Student Engagement:** Today's students are digital natives, and integrating technology into learning helps bridge the gap between their academic and personal lives, driving higher engagement levels.
- **Enhanced Digital Literacy:** With 92% of jobs requiring some level of digital proficiency, building these skills from an early age is crucial. 1-to-1 programs play a vital role in preparing students for the future workforce.
- **Equity in Learning:** For many students, especially those in underserved communities, school-provided devices are the only access they have to digital resources. Without 1-to-1 programs, millions of students risk falling further behind in an increasingly digital world.

## The Challenge Ahead: Post-ESSER Funding

With ESSER funds winding down, schools are faced with a crucial question: How do we sustain our 1-to-1 device programs? Beyond the initial purchase of devices, maintaining and repairing them requires significant financial resources, especially as budgets grow tighter.

At Tech Defenders, we understand these challenges. Many schools are grappling with rising costs, state-level funding cuts, and unpredictable revenue forecasts—all of which make it harder to keep these programs running. For lower-income districts, the impact of this financial strain could be even more severe, resulting in staff layoffs, program cuts, or even school closures.

## Solutions for Sustaining 1-to-1 Programs

Here are a few strategies that can help schools maintain their 1-to-1 device programs even as ESSER funding ends:

- **Leverage Device Buyback Programs:** One of the most effective ways to generate extra funds is by selling off older devices through a trusted buyback program like Tech Defenders. We help schools recoup the value of outdated or unused devices and reinvest that capital into new technology. Our transparent proposals and custom solutions ensure schools can maximize their returns.
- **Partner with the Community:** Schools can seek support from local governments or businesses that see the strategic value in sponsoring technology programs. A collaborative approach can ease the financial burden and foster stronger community ties.
- **Efficient Device Management:** Properly managing existing devices through inventory management systems can save schools significant costs. Asset management solutions can drastically help schools extend the life cycle of their technology, cutting down on replacement expenses and ensuring devices are always ready for students.
- **Focus on Digital Equity:** Maintaining equal access to technology is essential. From providing mobile hotspots to students without internet access to ensuring every device is connected and functional, schools must continue to prioritize digital equity in their 1-to-1 initiatives.

## Looking Ahead

As ESSER funding comes to a close, schools must be proactive in finding solutions to sustain their 1-to-1 programs. At Tech Defenders, we're committed to helping schools through this transition by offering customized, budget-friendly buyback programs that support their technology goals.

We believe every student deserves access to the tools they need to thrive in today's digital world. By leveraging creative solutions and working together, we can ensure that 1-to-1 device programs continue to provide students with the engagement, digital literacy, and equity they need to succeed.

## Citations

[1] EdWeek.org

[2] Eric.ed.gov