

Supporting Learning Acceleration with American Rescue Plan Funds

Students have experienced loss, illness, economic hardships, disrupted learning, trauma, and stress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 has touched all students, it has deepened pre-existing inequities facing students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, LGBTQI+ students, students experiencing homelessness, and other underserved students. These challenges can have a direct impact on student learning and growth. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides states, districts, and schools with significant federal resources to implement evidence-based strategies to accelerate learning through integrated and targeted supports, instructional approaches, tutoring, and high-quality out-of-school time.¹

In particular, in his State of the Union address as part of his Unity Agenda, President Biden laid out a call to action for more Americans to serve as mentors and tutors supporting students in order to help address the academic impact of lost instructional time. The historic resources available from the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) provide opportunities to significantly scale the number of students who have access to evidence-based learning acceleration strategies. For example, states, districts, and schools may use ARP ESSER funds to develop and implement programs to address lost instructional time and the social, emotional, and other academic needs of students, including programs that:

1. Use high-quality diagnostic and formative assessments to inform and personalize instruction

Diagnostic and [formative assessments](#) can provide information to educators and parents on where students are performing relative to their grade level and how students are progressing over time. Assessments and diagnostics can identify specific [aspects of student understanding](#), including where students may need additional supports and where students may be ready for more [advanced opportunities](#). Assessments can play an important role in guiding teaching, learning, and support when schools and districts:

- Treat students' **current understanding as assets** to be leveraged in future learning.
- **Assess student learning along multi-grade continuums and learning progressions**, including grade-level performance.
- Use assessments to develop **performance-based approaches and connections to curriculum** to directly support teaching and learning along learning progressions in culturally and linguistically responsive ways.
- Provide **clear guidance and support to teachers to ensure they understand** and can apply the results of the assessments to inform their instructions and support students and their continued progress.

¹ Accelerated learning provides opportunities for students to get back to grade level, without rushing through content, by using evidence-based strategies that help students fill gaps in skills and content rather than through tracking or remediation, which can narrow educational opportunities for students and might lead them to become disengaged.

2. Implement high-quality and effective tutoring

Tutoring can yield important results for students when done in effective ways. The best available evidence suggests that tutoring is most effective when districts and schools:

- Use **trained staff and educators as tutors**. Teachers, paraprofessionals, teaching candidates, and recently retired teachers are most likely to be effective, especially when given ongoing coaching and time to plan and collaborate with classroom teachers. However, others [can be effective](#) tutors when they receive pre-service and ongoing training and professional development.
- **Regularly provide opportunities for tutoring**. Schedules that include frequent sessions—at least [three times a week](#) of at least 30-50 minutes—are most effective in accelerating learning.
- **Schedule tutoring sessions during the school day** when possible. Research shows that tutoring programs that occur [during the school day](#) have the largest effects. School leaders can ensure students still receive core instruction by creating space for tutoring by using double blocking or tutoring during study hall and flexible periods.
- **Align tutoring with an evidence-based curriculum**. Tutoring may be more effective when it is conducted alongside a high-quality curriculum and practices that support positive learning experiences during regular class time.

3. Integrate and prioritize the social, emotional, and academic needs of all students

Research shows that social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development are linked, and schools can promote student growth in each of these areas. For example, districts and schools can:

- **Implement evidence-based schoolwide programs and strategies** to support social, emotional, and academic development, including tools such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ([PBIS](#)) and the [CASEL School Guide](#).
- **Design equitable learning environments for students** by focusing on developing strong and trusting relationships, fostering belonging, creating rigorous and engaging and culturally responsive learning environments, and offering integrated support systems.
- Use evidence-based strategies to **create school systems, structures, and practices** that support all aspects of child development.

4. Provide students with tailored learning acceleration opportunities

Learning acceleration is a strategy designed to get students on grade-level by using evidence-based interventions to help close content and skill gaps as efficiently as possible. The goal of tailored acceleration is to ensure that all students attain college and career readiness regardless of where they may be starting. [Research shows](#) that learning acceleration is an important strategy for advancing equity and that students who experienced acceleration struggled less and learned more than students who started at the same point but experienced remediation instead. To support learning acceleration, districts and schools can:

- **Provide teachers and staff with high-quality and ongoing professional development and coaching**, including on how to identify content and skills that need to be prioritized, design and select instructional strategies, and use data to inform instruction. Professional learning communities may provide such professional development and coaching. Professional learning communities [are most effective](#) when they use data to determine student and educator learning needs, identify shared goals for student and educator learning, support educators in their content instruction and classroom management strategies, select and implement appropriate evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes, and use evidence to monitor progress and improve when needed.

- **Use school vacation time during the school year to support students with the greatest need.** For example, [Acceleration Academies](#) are intensive, targeted, instructional programs conducted over [vacation breaks](#) to support student learning and help students to address lost instructional time.
- Adopt and use **high-quality instructional materials** that appropriately challenge students, are [culturally relevant](#), and are aligned to grade-level standards.

5. Support the successful transitions of students from pre-school to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary education and the workforce

Students thrive when they have access to appropriately challenging programs and instructional materials that are aligned to rigorous standards and culturally and linguistically relevant. To better understand where students are and the supports they need to succeed during key transitions in their education, schools can employ a data-driven decision making process to identify and match students' needs to interventions and monitor their progress. To support these efforts, districts and schools can:

- **Establish an early warning indicator (EWI) and intervention system to promote targeted engagement** [strategies in response to data from EWIs](#). EWI systems can track attendance, assignment completion, discipline, and grades. When appropriately viewed at the school, grade, classroom, and student level to support student wellbeing, these data can strengthen a school's ability to provide specific and [timely interventions](#). For example, schools can use [on-track indicators](#) to assess how well students are making the transition into middle and high school so that the schools can provide additional supports as needed.
- **Establish summer bridge programs** that provide social, emotional, and academic support for students entering middle and high school to ensure that they are ready for middle and high school and set on a path toward success.
- States and districts can also leverage funding to improve access and success in **college in high school programs**. [College in High School programs](#) are an effective tool to increase access to college, improve persistence and completion in college, improve workforce readiness, and reduce the overall costs of college.

6. Use high-quality out-of-school time (OST) learning experiences to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs

Research has shown that learning can happen in many contexts.² A wide range of programs can be delivered via OST programs, including work-based learning programs, youth development programs, and experiential or service-learning programs. High-quality evidence-based programs that are strongly rooted in the school context can also lead to positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes, greater self-confidence, increased civic engagement, better attendance, improved high school graduation, and decreased disciplinary actions. In designing and implementing high-quality [OST programs](#), schools and districts can:

- **Align OST programs academically** with the school curriculum so OST educators can build on skills and materials students are already learning.
- Create systems and processes to **adapt instruction to individual and small group needs**. OST groups of more than 20 students per staff member are shown to be [less effective](#).

² [Chapter 1: How Learning Happens - A Nation At Hope](#)

- **Provide high-quality, engaging learning experiences** to students with the goal of providing students important opportunities for academic support and access to enrichment activities that develop social and emotional wellbeing and leadership skills.
- Ensure students with the most need for additional support have adequate **opportunity to participate in OST programs**.
- Regularly **assess program performance** using disaggregated results to improve or adjust the program as needed.
- **Partner with community-based organizations and local intermediary organizations** to increase access to high-quality OST opportunities. [Partnerships](#) may provide additional enrichment opportunities; expand the opportunity for students to interact with organization staff who may be more racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse; and create additional opportunities for community engagement.³
- **Support students with disabilities by providing [Extended School Year \(ESY\) services](#)** under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These services can help accelerate learning for IDEA-eligible students with disabilities who, based on their individual needs as determined by the student’s individualized education program team, need instruction beyond the regular school year in order to receive a free appropriate public education. ARP resources may be used to support the IDEA ESY authority or to provide summer learning and acceleration programs for students with disabilities who may not qualify for ESY.

Learning Acceleration Highlights of ARP ESSER State Plans
<p>The Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education established the Arkansas Tutoring Corps that aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a system of recruiting and training tutors who are equipped to meet the academic needs of students in their geographic area. • Expand the Arkansas Tutoring Corps across the state. • Connect potential tutors with organizations employing tutors to serve students with academic needs in Arkansas. <p>An online system connects prepared tutor candidates with organizations seeking to support students’ academic needs. The program is already enhancing learning experiences of students due to loss of instructional time and addressing gaps in foundational skills in mathematics and literacy.</p>
<p>The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) is using \$22 million to fund a suite of supports grounded in accelerated learning, including intensive tutoring. NMPED will fund 500 fellows through initial boot camp-style training and place them in elementary classrooms across the state. The program will use accelerated learning practices that effectively use small group instruction and targeted intensive tutoring.</p>
<p>The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) is working in partnership with Oklahoma colleges and universities to invest in a Math Tutoring Corps to address middle and high school learning disruption. OSDE will invest in Algebra I tutoring for up to 1500 students in grades 7-12 per year. Tutors will provide 100 hours of free tutoring to each student on a virtual platform. The student to tutor ratio will be no more than 3:1 and tutors will be supervised and coached by college and university math faculty.</p>
<p>Rhode Island’s Learning, Equity and Accelerated Pathways District Support Program (LEAP) Task Force identified tutoring as one of the specific recommendations to meet the diverse needs of students.</p>

³ All strategies to increase racial diversity of educators must comply with applicable law, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Rhode Island is launching [an effort to expand intensive tutoring statewide](#). The **Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)** will provide technical assistance to district leaders in developing tutoring programs for their districts based on practices modeled in a pilot program launched by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. RIDE will also convene and coordinate several related tutoring initiatives such as expansion of the state’s AmeriCorps organization.

The **South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)** plans to work with partner organizations and local educational agencies (LEAs) to support and provide intensive tutoring to students who have been most impacted by COVID. SCDE will also provide funds directly to the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance to enable afterschool programs designed to address academic learning loss. One of the criteria that programs must meet to be eligible for funds is providing 50-60 minutes of academic instruction and tutoring beyond homework help in literacy and math.

The **Tennessee Department of Education** will use the 5 percent state-level set aside to focus on intensive tutoring to address the academic impact of lost instructional time. This statewide tutoring model, called [TN ALL Corps](#) (Tennessee Accelerating Literacy and Learning Corps), will ensure Tennessee students have access to intensive, low ratio tutoring over the next 3 years. Tennessee will prioritize a tutoring program leveraging all available dollars and partners with a goal to maximize tailored supports for students who need it most. Districts will have the opportunity to apply for matching grants to fund this intensive tutoring. Further, Tennessee will also offer matching grants for community partners to ensure all stakeholders have access to provide academic acceleration supports for students.

ARP-Funded Programs and Practices in Districts and Schools

Huber Heights City Schools in Ohio is leveraging ARP ESSER funds to provide more staffing at every elementary building through the addition of 30 grade-level tutors. These tutors will be trained using an “asset-based” model that focuses on relationships, building student confidence, goal setting, and learning important content to accelerate learning. Several evidence-based strategies will be employed including small group instruction, frequent assessment and response, intensive instruction, and targeted instruction based on progress monitoring. These strategies will also be employed at the middle school and high school levels through a focus on the Multi-tiered Systems of Support model. The entire district is moving towards a small group instructional model across all grade levels and subject areas, which will be directly supported through building-based professional development, curriculum coaching, ongoing monitoring, and administrative support.

Additionally, the district is partnering with Wright State University to ensure that students have further tutoring support provided by college students during and after school. They will use evidence-based strategies that will be taught and monitored by cooperating teachers.

East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools in Louisiana is using ARP ESSER funding for increased tutoring and summer enrichment programs. These include 20 math coaches to work with teachers and students and English language learner coaches.

With ARP ESSER funds, **Florida's Miami-Dade County Public Schools**, the fourth largest school district in the country, plans to spend as much as \$30 million for K-12 tutors and interventionists through the next school year, and another \$20 million for after-school enrichment programs.

Another example is the [Lawrence Public School](#) system, which provided accelerated learning opportunities during school breaks, resulting in significant gains in student performance

Out-of-School Time Highlights of ARP ESSER State Plans

The **Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)** is partnering with Arkansas State University, through its Arkansas Out-of-School Network (Network), to grant the funding set aside for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs as well as comprehensive afterschool programs. DESE, with the support of the Network, has awarded \$6.25 million in ARP ESSER funds to 53 afterschool, summer, and extended year learning programs across the state that meet the criteria for evidence-based summer-learning and enrichment programs. The grant gave preference to programs that address academic impact of lost instructional time and provide summer, enrichment, and comprehensive afterschool programs that address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on student subgroups identified in the ARP State Plan, specifically students living in poverty and students experiencing homelessness. Notably, each grant recipient will be required to document strong community engagement and collaboration to create a community learning environment. The Network will periodically collect data from the sub-awardees to determine the effectiveness of the program and will report findings to the state educational agency.

The **Georgia Department of Education (GDOE)** is combining the 1 percent ARP set aside for Comprehensive Afterschool Programs and the 1 percent set aside for Summer Learning and Enrichment to fund the [Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time \(BOOST\) grant competition](#). GDOE is partnering with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to administer BOOST, which is prioritizing various groups of disadvantaged students. BOOST grants prioritize programs with sites in communities with no government-funded afterschool or summer learning programs, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Georgia's Afterschool Care Program administered by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. BOOST grants include training and technical assistance to grantees to support quality improvements, data collection, and evaluation in support of sustainability.

The **Utah State Board of Education** will award ARP ESSER funds for evidence-based summer learning and afterschool programming through a competitive grant process to LEAs and community-based organizations. Applicants must include a description of the proposed evidence-based interventions designed to support students' academic needs and social, emotional, and mental health needs. Applicants must also submit targeted plans to serve students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and applications will be reviewed by subject matter experts. Awardees will participate in [technical assistance activities](#) with the state's afterschool network, Utah Afterschool Network (UAN), or a UAN designee.

Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma has partnered with a local intermediary organization, the Opportunity Project, to [use roughly a quarter of its ESSER II and ARP ESSER dollars to create more before school, after school, and summer learning opportunities](#). The Opportunity Project coordinated more than 80 community and faith-based organizations to provide a range of opportunities and experiences to students in June and August of 2021. The Opportunity Project organized the RFP process, and the district used federal funds to help existing community-based organizations expand programming. District leaders plan to sustain these initiatives into the future by attracting philanthropic and government funds.

Stamford Public Schools in Connecticut partnered with [Stamford Cradle to Career \(SC2C\)](#), a community-based organization, to assist in coordinating a new universal 6-week summer program for its elementary school students. In summer 2021, [SC2C supported the district](#) by managing a planning process in partnership with Stamford Public Schools and Stamford Public Education Foundation to enlist community-based organizations to provide enrichment activities at school sites during the afternoon portion of the program. A total of 14 community-based organizations serving 1,200 students provided programming in sports, arts, and science that ran for 6 weeks in summer 2021.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the **Smyrna School District** in Delaware used ARP ESSER funds to offer a year-long program that extends the school day to support students who lost in-person instructional time during the pandemic. The program is conducted by the Boys and Girls Club at six elementary schools and is available to all students in grades K-6 free of charge. The Boys and Girls Club provided the staff and program framework, and the district contributed instructional coaching staff to provide high-quality instructional materials, and training and support, to the Boys and Girls Club staff.

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