

UPDATED: Supporting Learning Acceleration with American Rescue Plan Funds

October 2022

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. 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

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.

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.

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. 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 instruction and support students and their continued progress.

4. 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.

5. Support the successful transitions of students from preschool 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 well-being, 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, such as afterschool and summer 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](#).
- **Provide high-quality, engaging learning experiences** to students with the goal of providing students with 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: ARP-Funded Programs and Practices in States
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The Oklahoma State Department of Education is working in partnership with Oklahoma colleges and universities to invest in a Math Tutoring Corps to address middle school learning disruption. OSDE is investing in Algebra readiness tutoring for up to 1500 students in grades 7-9 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.
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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.

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

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

<p>Rhode Island is launching an effort to expand intensive tutoring statewide. The Rhode Island Department of Education is providing 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.</p>
<p>The South Carolina Department of Education is working with partner organizations and local educational agencies (LEAs) to support and provide tutoring to students who have been most impacted by COVID. SCDE partnered with the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance to provide \$14.5 million to expand summer and afterschool programs designed to address academic learning loss.</p>
<p>The Tennessee Department of Education is using ARP funds 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 three years. There are currently 87 districts across Tennessee participating in TN ALL Corps, representing over 200,000 students served over the next three years.</p>
<p>The Georgia Department of Education is combining the 1% ARP set aside for Comprehensive Afterschool Programs and the 1% 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.</p>
<p>The Utah State Board of Education awarded more than \$12 million in ARP ESSER funds for evidence-based summer learning and afterschool programming through a competitive grant process to LEAs and community-based organizations. Applicants included a description of the proposed evidence-based interventions designed to support students’ academic needs and social, emotional, and mental health needs. Applicants also submitted 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.</p>
<p>The Oregon Department of Education plans to use ARP ESSER State-level reservation funds to address lost instructional time to re-engage high school students who need additional credits to graduate by working to ensure that each local education agency has “an equity-centered plan to invest in drop-out prevention, accelerated learning opportunities (i.e., dual credit), and CTE programs that are tailored to local needs and careers of the future.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Learning Acceleration: ARP-Funded Programs and Practices in Districts and Schools</p>
<p>East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools in Louisiana is using ARP ESSER funding to increase tutoring and summer enrichment programs. These include 20 math coaches to work with teachers and students and English language learner coaches.</p>
<p>Another example is the Lawrence Public School system, which provided accelerated learning opportunities during school breaks, resulting in significant gains in student performance</p>
<p>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 has coordinated over 80 community and faith-based organizations to provide a range of summer</p>

enrichment opportunities and experiences for students. 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 for the next few years.

Stamford Public Schools in Connecticut partnered with [Stamford Cradle to Career \(SC2C\)](#), a community-based organization, to assist in coordinating a new universal six-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 six weeks in summer 2021.

Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky used ARP funds to open the first of three [student support centers](#). Each center is staffed by retired teachers who provide targeted support to students who were chronically absent during the pandemic. In total, Jefferson County intends to allot [\\$35 million of ARP funding](#) to student learning centers and community learning hubs.

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools in Michigan is using ARP resources to increase their high school counseling staff to decrease counselor caseloads, leading to the ability to better facilitate individual student meetings; review academic progress and social-emotional needs of students; engage in Instructional Support Team meetings; provide Tier 2 supports for students at risk, and develop a wellness center at each campus.

The Lindsay Unified School District in California, where more than 90% of students are from families with low-income backgrounds and 41% are English learners, which has seen steady and significant gains in academic performance by using technology to create learner-centered, inquiry-based, and personalized learning opportunities for students.

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