# How are states planning to leverage their ARP funding?

*An initial analysis of trends and considerations | July 2021*

# Introduction

After more than 18 months of uncertainty, state and local education systems are at last able to transition from *reacting* to the immediate urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic to *proactively planning for and moving toward* recovery, bolstered by an historic influx of federal funding. In 2020 the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund) first provided resources to support the transition to remote learning, support student and family basic needs and begin to safely reopen school buildings; in 2021 the American Rescue Plan has offered $122 billion more to propel states in their efforts to address the wide-reaching impacts the pandemic has had on student learning and well-being.

States have developed complex, stakeholder-informed plans to use their ARP funding to seed proven strategies to accelerate learning, address long-standing inequities, attend to student and adult mental health needs, build educator and system capacity and measure impact. Most state plans include strategies that were gaining traction prior to the pandemic, such as prioritizing student well-being and connectedness, adopting high-quality curriculum materials and aligned professional development and implementing multi-tiered systems of support. Others are leveraging their funding to launch new programs meant to address unfinished learning, such as high-dosage tutoring opportunities before, during and after school hours.

In many states the pandemic heightened long-standing inequities in student outcomes and community resources and exacerbated ongoing challenges related to technology and the collection and use of reliable, actionable data. In response, many state plans include strategies to address student mental health and well-being, expand access to broadband and digital learning platforms, and to develop new metrics and measures to collect and analyze student data. Plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Education represent initial state thinking on strategies and are not comprehensive descriptions of everything a state or local district will do to leverage its federal relief funding over the next three years.

At the request of [The Council of Chief State School Officers](#) (CCSSO), [Education First](#) conducted a detailed analysis of the 35 state plans that were submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the end of June to identify common themes and challenges and to elevate innovative strategies that show great promise. *(See Appendix for a complete list of states reviewed and their ARP fund allocation.)*

**This memo provides an overview of findings from that analysis**, including a summary of the big themes that emerged, a wide array of state examples and links to relevant resources. The four major themes across the 35 state plans that were reviewed are:

1) **Unfinished Learning.** States are using a variety of evidence-based strategies to accelerate student learning, including the expansion of existing programs, the adoption of high-quality instructional materials and heavily investing in new strategies like high-dosage tutoring in order to meet each student's individual needs. (pages 3-8)

2) **Student Mental Health, Well-Being and Connectedness**. States have prioritized health and wellness, recognizing the trauma and stress that both students and teachers have endured throughout the pandemic. States are using their funding to invest in programs and services to attend to both student and teacher mental, social, emotional and behavioral health, and are continuing to invest in efforts to provide necessary support for families at home, including meal and transportation programs. (pages 9-13)

3) **Building Capacity.** States are adapting educator pipeline policies and programming to address the swell of teacher and leader vacancies, while providing expanded professional learning opportunities tailored to the current moment, particularly related to remote instruction, and strategies to address unfinished learning. (pages 13-16)

4) **Data and Funding Sustainability.** States are utilizing new and existing assessments to support the identification of individual students and groups most impacted by the pandemic along with integrating progress and fiscal monitoring into existing systems, expanding monitoring capacity and keeping an eye on sustainability. (pages 16-20)

States are encouraged to use the ideas in this memo to inform their own thinking and to continue to share any new initiatives and tools with CCSSO to distribute to the field in the months ahead.

## THEME I: UNFINISHED LEARNING

Research and initial data suggest that students nationwide experienced some level of "unfinished learning" during the pandemic, exacerbating existing achievement gaps and inequities. A [recent report](#) by TNTP and Zearn found that putting a focus on the current grade's content and "just-in-time" academic supports can be more effective than traditional remediation, particularly for students of color and those from low-income families. States identified an array of evidence-based interventions to support their goals, including the adoption and use

**Arkansas** will support evidence-based summer and after school programs through a partnership with the [Arkansas Out-of-School Network](#), and support high-quality tutoring by helping to establish a Tutoring Corps to link students to qualified tutors statewide. The SEA plans to expand the professional learning process through regional networks throughout the state, which will add more than 50 additional schools to training and coaching.

of high-quality instructional materials, investments in learning management systems and the use of proven digital learning platforms that include virtual curricula. Some states released academic frameworks to guide instructional decision-making and school reopening; others focused on strategies like high-dosage tutoring to give students individualized and small group support.

### *Statewide Frameworks*

Some states created detailed frameworks to guide district planning through the 2020-21 school year and summer programming, and to inform initial thinking about the upcoming 2021-22 school year. In many cases these frameworks focused largely on guidance related to student wellness, health and safety; other states made strategic hiring decisions to retain a laser focus on equity; still others released academic acceleration roadmaps with high-level guidance and goals, suggested strategies across content areas and links to relevant resources.

- **Idaho** approved the [Idaho Back to School Framework](#) to map out expectations, guidelines and best practices to ensure a safe and successful school environment. This document will continue to be updated by the Board / SEA as necessary to remain current with changes to state and federal guidance.
- **Illinois'** P-20 Council created the [Learning Renewal Resource Guide](#), a living document that highlights opportunities to invest in learning renewal and acceleration, as well as strategies to support students, educators and the broader school community.
- **Kentucky** is focused on improving educational equity for all students, and during the 2020-21 school year, hired the state's first chief equity officer. This position is charged with

promoting equity across the Commonwealth. The chief equity officer and his staff have developed trainings, participated in public listening tours and met with targeted stakeholder groups to begin the process of supporting districts in their expanded equity efforts. KDE will soon be releasing a new Equity Tool Kit that will be used to support districts in their efforts to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19.

- **Massachusetts** created an [Acceleration Roadmap](#) organized around three overarching priorities grounded in research and extensive stakeholder feedback to guide district planning: (1) Foster a sense of belonging and partnership among students and families, (2) Continuously monitor students' understanding, and (3) Ensure strong grade-appropriate instruction with just-in-time scaffolds.

- **Maine** developed the [Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction](#) to assist Maine educators with planning for the return to in-person, classroom instruction. The framework includes six sections with guidance on academic programs and student learning considerations, physical health and safety, and SEL and mental health.

- **Wyoming** collaborated with other state agencies, education leaders, public health leaders and other key stakeholders to develop the Smart Start Taskforce to discuss and inform plans for school reopening. During summer 2020, the Taskforce developed a practical [guidance tool](#) that includes resources, recommendations and multi-tiered considerations based on local context. LEAs used this guidance to develop their own district-level Smart Start plans and made them publicly available as a shared resource for best practice within the state. The Task Force will reconvene to review, share and publish lessons learned after implementation of Smart Start plans during the 2020-21 academic year.

## *High-Quality Instructional Materials*

States are building on efforts to ensure school districts have immediate access to standards-aligned, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). States are continuing to expand the grade bands and content areas included in learning management systems, which provide virtual access to these materials, as well as curricula, standards, professional learning modules and other tools. These efforts include supporting educators to identify and focus on Priority Standards and securing licenses for access to nationally-recognized curricula with digital, adaptable components.

- **Connecticut** will use a portion of its ARP funding to create a statewide model K-8 curricula to provide all students with multiple and varied opportunities to engage, discover and connect to challenging content designed by their teachers using high-quality, aligned instructional materials. The curricula will integrate topics including Native American, Asian American and LGBTQ+ studies, climate change, personal financial literacy, civics and citizenship, digital citizenship and media literacy. The state will also use a portion of its ARP

funds for statewide implementation of its new Black and Latino Studies curriculum. In addition to curricula development, funding will support engagement with stakeholders in the educational community, a request for proposals on high-quality instructional materials, focus groups and a teacher curriculum leadership program to support teachers in implementing the new curriculum in each district. The Statewide Model Curricula will be made universally accessible on the CSDE website.

- **New Mexico** established a statewide Learning Management System (LMS) in 2020 that provides free access and complete, 24-hour customer service to families, students, and educators. The LMS contains high-quality instructional materials to be used across grade levels and provides a forum for connectivity among educators and a warehouse for professional learning. It serves as a quick, effective tool for supporting educators to navigate a completely virtual model of instruction, and has helped the state in its efforts to encourage the adoption and use of HQIM.

- **Oregon** describes accelerated learning "as part of a responsive system, grounded in equity, meeting students where they are… by building on strengths and creating the conditions to support [student] needs." Oregon's plan emphasizes this need by highlighting access to high-quality, culturally-sustaining and revitalizing instruction. The state will use funds to expand opportunities to students currently and historically underserved by the system by offering access to programs including AP, IB and dual credit. The state will provide affiliated tools and resources such as professional development, formative assessments and culturally-responsive learning materials.

- **Rhode Island** plans to strengthen its core instruction with a focus on literacy and mathematics, including investments in high-quality instructional materials. Using ARP funds, RIDE will launch a math strategy that will provide Eureka-specific curriculum implementation support in the elementary grades. RIDE will also support the development of modules and online classes that support awareness of the science of reading.

## *High-Dosage Tutoring*

Many states rely heavily on high-dosage tutoring as a primary strategy in their plans. Recognizing that this one-on-one or small group support creates a capacity challenge, states are leveraging state-directed initiatives, supporting local implementation by LEAs or building partnerships with community-based organizations and other vendors to meet ambitious goals. Plans vary in the specificity of program details and providers.

- **Arkansas** plans to establish a Tutoring Corps focused on math and literacy. The SEA will create a system to recruit, prepare and support candidates to become qualified tutors who provide instruction or intervention for at-risk learners, or students most impacted by lost instructional time.

- **Illinois** will use a portion of its set-aside to implement a High-Impact Tutoring program where tutors will be identified and paid a stipend through a regional structure created by universities and community colleges.
- **Rhode Island** will build out technical assistance learning communities to support district leaders in developing tutoring programs by training district staff on research-based best practices for high-dosage tutoring, modeled on a similar pilot program in the state launched by Brown University's Annenberg Institute.
- **Tennessee** will support high-dosage tutoring through the Tennessee Accelerating Literacy and Learning Corps (TN ALL Corps). This model will span the next three years and will provide tutor training and certification, grade-level specific content, high-dosage tutoring, significant guidance and tutoring resources and a directory of state-reviewed providers. TDOE will offer districts the opportunity to apply for matching grants to fund TN ALL Corps, as well as offer matching grants for community partners to help provide academic acceleration supports for students. TDOE will also continue to invest in reading and early literacy through its statewide Reading360 initiative, launched earlier this year, directing a suite of supports and resources to boost third grade reading proficiency.

## *Remote Learning*

The primary strategy in most state plans is in-person instructional delivery, but some are continuing to leverage remote learning strategies to bolster instructional options, provide options for students not yet comfortable returning to physical classrooms and allow contingencies for future emergencies. Approaches include statewide virtual schools, platforms with standards-aligned digital curricula, asynchronous modules that students can complete on their own time to complement their schoolwork and virtual elementary and secondary school course portfolios. Some states will also continue to address gaps in technology and connectivity by providing devices, strengthening broadband access and distributing hotspots in targeted communities.

- **New Hampshire** invested more than $6 million in federal funding to create a new state-level learning management system in collaboration with the University System of New Hampshire. This system offers all schools, educators and families a technology platform for the effective deployment of remote and online instruction, including best practices for synchronous instruction. The SEA will continue to expand the learning management system's utility, as it enables evidence-based and high-quality instructional materials, courses and professional development.
- **New York** convened a series of Digital Equity Summits to establish a shared understanding of digital inequity and create a joint vision toward achieving digital equity in New York State. The summits brought together education, government, community and business partners

to develop recommendations for systems and policy change, and action at the federal, state, local and organizational levels. NYSE will share the results of this work in a final report that will be used as a blueprint for continued change.

- **Ohio** launched RemotEDx, a state-level initiative that brings together a unique mix of remote, hybrid and blended learning partners from across the state to help schools and districts enhance, expand and more effectively scale high-quality remote, hybrid and blended education delivery models. Consistent with *Each Child, Our Future*, Ohio's strategic plan for education, RemotEDx prioritizes equity and seeks to support the state's most underserved students.

- **Texas** launched the Operation Connectivity Task Force with the Governor's office and worked closely with telecom providers to negotiate competitive broadband pricing on behalf of districts. Through this statewide procurement, districts saved up to 50% on the cost of devices and connectivity. Between May and December 2020 Operation Connectivity supported the acquisition of 4.5 million devices for students, resulting in a 1:1 ratio of device access per student. The state leveraged $900 million in CARES Act funding to fund this initiative, combining it with federal state and local sources.

- **Wyoming** developed 2020-21 Distance Learning: Guidance for Wyoming School Districts in July 2020 with a framework for classroom-based virtual education (CBVE) to ensure that students who were uncomfortable and/or unable to return to in-person instruction had equitable access to classroom-based courses. 43 of 48 Wyoming districts and one charter school submitted plans for CBVE programs, and the state will continue to offer full-time virtual education as an option for all Wyoming students for the 2021-22 school year.

## *Summer and After-School Programming*

All states addressed summer learning, after-school and/or other out-of-school strategies in their plans; the amount of funding they plan to allocate and programmatic approaches vary. Many states indicated plans to partner with community-based organizations or other providers, particularly after school programs. Other states are using their set-asides to directly cover the cost of summer school programming, after school programming or funding supports such as professional development. Literacy and math are the most commonly mentioned content areas of focus; some states will also offer programs that focus on CTE and STEAM, and plan to integrate strategies to address students' social and emotional needs. States are focused on different grade bands, with most prioritizing students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic or lost more instructional time.

- **Connecticut** offered expansion grants of up to $25K to summer enrichment programs able to expand capacity for summer 2021 by offering additional slots for students or by subsidizing enrollment fees. Reviewers prioritized programs that serve social-emotional

learning (SEL) needs and are evidence-based with a track record of success. Grantees will offer programs at zero or very low cost to children.

- **Kentucky** is investing in effective, comprehensive summer learning programs that integrate SEL, with specifications for components of effective programs. The state released "[Accelerating Student Learning During Summer Learning Programs and Through the Academic Year](#)," which includes research-based recommendations related to effective summer programming designed to accelerate student learning, integrate SEL and leverage high-intensity tutoring and vacation academies throughout the academic school year. The state also offered Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Summer Learning Grants to districts, accompanied by state-provided comprehensive professional development, state and national resources, capacity-building and ongoing technical assistance.

- **Maine** developed the [Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education](#) (MOOSE) for use in locally developed summer programming. MOOSE is an online platform that contains a learning library of assorted project-based learning experiences that address health and wellness and career readiness. The modules embed learning about the ways gender stereotypes and expectations of conformity limit the social, emotional and cognitive development of students of all genders and will provide needed models of education about topics including healthy dating relationships, consent, harassment, and assault. Models of this kind will address the needs of students who identify as LGBTQ+ as well as students for whom schools have traditionally been unwelcoming.

- **New Mexico** is offering a paid summer internship program for teens in June through September of 2021 as a way to introduce them to the workforce and connect students back to school in time for the 2021-22 academic year. The program will offer high schoolers an opportunity to participate in internships for up to 20 hours per week for six weeks in government agencies, including county, tribal and/or municipal placements.

- **Texas** will invest in summer learning programs for students and will use design-thinking based processes to extend the school day and year. This summer and throughout the 2021-22 school year the state will also offer high-dosage tutoring, high-quality instructional materials, and job-embedded professional learning to help address the academic impact of lost instructional time on K-12 students. TEA will create a diagnostic application process for LEAs to identify which evidence-based interventions are the right fit for its schools.

## THEME II: STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND CONNECTEDNESS

Students' learning is hindered when their physical, mental, social, emotional and behavioral needs are left unaddressed, and state plans reflect a common agreement that student mental health and well-being and trauma-informed approaches will be critical to academic and community recovery. Many states identified mental health and wellness as a top priority for students during COVID-19 recovery, focusing on immediate needs such as food insecurity and responding to trauma. State plans also included longer-term efforts to build capacity and sustainability, such as delivering adjacent services through guiding frameworks, and integrating mental, social, emotional and behavioral learning into instruction as well as summer and after-school programming.

**New Mexico** will continue its partnership with the Graduation Alliance to build Engage New Mexico, a project designed to meet the needs of students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. The project provides a personal academic coach and counselor to support students struggling with engagement and/or chronic absenteeism. Students who missed the most in-person instruction and were largely disengaged during 2020-2021 will be identified for automatic tiered support moving into 2021-2022 and the project tracks interventions and successes.

### Student Health and Wellness

Approximately half of the state plans listed students' mental, social, emotional and behavioral health, including trauma due to or exacerbated by the pandemic, as one of the top three pandemic-related issues currently facing students and schools. Common strategies states plan to leverage include the use of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework or a Whole Child Framework. Other strategies include offering enhanced counseling or guidance services, integrating SEL into instructional approaches, summer programming and offering virtual on-demand tools and resources.

- **Alaska** will provide ongoing guidance and resources to LEAs to support staff and students' social, emotional, and mental health through webinars, e-learning, and training, as detailed in the Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma Engaged Practice in Alaska toolkit.
- **Delaware** has been implementing Project DelAWARE and Project THRIVE in response to Governor Carney's 2018 executive order making Delaware a trauma-informed state. These initiatives include MTSS coaching and support, PBIS support and the Trauma Recovery Demonstration Project, which develops trauma-specific therapeutic service delivery models for students who are experiencing poverty and require intense support. In addition, the

Delaware Department of Education partnered with the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies to develop a [reentry toolkit](#) for supporting students and staff.

- **Illinois** has partnered with the state's Department of Public Health to provide access to all district high schools to [SHIELD Illinois](#), the University of Illinois' innovative polymerase chain reaction saliva test. The Illinois Department of Public Health is providing the test at no cost to high schools in Evidence-Based Funding Tiers 1 and 2 and at a subsidized rate to high schools in Tiers 3 and 4. School districts also have free access to Abbott's BinaxNOW rapid test through the state and/or local public health departments.

- **Ohio** released its [Whole Child Framework](#) in the fall of 2020, increasing its focus on non-education data for needs assessments, including data on physical and mental health, neglect and abuse reporting and unemployment claims. Multiple state agencies contributed data sources to this framework, including the Healthy Youth Environmental Survey (OHYES!), Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Ohio Healthy Students Data Insights Report.

- **Utah** is collaborating with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to update the statewide [School Behavioral Health Toolkit](#), which provides recommendations for addressing students' mental and emotional wellness. The [SafeUT program](#), which was established in 2014 and provides 24/7 student crisis intervention services by licensed clinicians, is also being integrated into state and local mental health and safety intervention procedures. The state is also offering multiple grants, including Project [**A**dvancing **W**ellness **a**nd **R**esilience in **E**ducation](#) (AWARE), which aims to build a comprehensive approach model to school-based mental health to increase mental health literacy and support services to schools and communities.

## *Statewide and National Health Guidance*

Many states plan to leverage cross-agency partnerships, mainly with state departments of health and community health organizations, to translate CDC health and safety guidance into local contexts and regularly disseminate and update school-focused guidelines. Most states will continue to provide this statewide guidance for the 2021-22 school year at minimum, and in some cases, indefinitely.

- **Alaska** has provided up-to-date guidance, a health and safety toolkit and a professional development conference through the [Alaska Smart Start 2020](#) initiative in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center. These resources will continue to be updated and shared with local leaders through weekly School Health ECHO forums.

- **Kentucky** partnered with the Kentucky Department of Public Health to develop "[Guidance and Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools (K-12)](#)," a comprehensive

tool that has become a flagship guide for COVID-response in schools across Kentucky, as well as in neighboring states.

- **Maine** issued a comprehensive six-part [Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction](). The Maine CDC publishes a dashboard with COVID-19 cases by school and the Maine Department of Education supports a COVID-19 Toolkit that provides the latest information about the Department's response to the public health emergency.

- **Michigan** has released an array of tools and resources to guide district health and safety practices, including the [MI Safe Schools Roadmap](), [Return to School Toolkit]() for mental health guidance, and a website with COVID resources and weekly communications from the CDC and governor's office. The [Protect Michigan Commission]() (PMC), composed of a diverse group of leaders from across the state, is also continually providing up-to-date information on the COVID-19 vaccine.

## *Meal Programs*

Many states also see food insecurity as one of the top three issues currently facing students and schools. During 2020, many bolstered their existing free meal programs for students and families by offering both delivery and "grab-and-go" options. Partnerships with state agencies and community organizations were integral to providing more meals for students and families and will continue to be a key strategy for ensuring all students have access to healthy, reliable meals.

- **Michigan** families have been able to pick up meals from locations across the state, or have shelf-stable meals mailed to their homes. Strong partnerships with such agencies as the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Food Bank Council of Michigan proved to be invaluable in advocating for and reaching Michigan's most vulnerable children, including providing the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) benefits to over 1 million children.

- **Montana** has made food insecurity one of its top three priority strategies during the pandemic, switching from the National School Lunch Program to a Summer Food Service Program, which allows wider access to meals for students facing food insecurity.

- **Oklahoma** used school buses to deliver meals and instructional materials to student homes and bus stops statewide during school closures. Schools also provided grab-and-go meals for students and families, giving more than one meal at a time and allowing parents to pick up meals even when students were not present. Oklahoma will serve free meals to all students during the 2021-22 school year and will continue flexible grab-and-go meal service for students not returning to in-person learning.

- **West Virginia's** Office of Child Nutrition created meal delivery programs in all 55 LEAs on March 13, 2020, within 48 hours of schools closing for quarantine. Statewide, all LEAs

continued to provide meal services and delivery during summer 2020 and during periods of remote learning within the 2020-21 school year. West Virginia will continue to provide meals through summer 2021.

## *Re-Engaging Students*

Many states highlighted re-engaging students who had been less engaged in remote learning, or who faced significant barriers to remote learning based on experiences like homelessness, as a top challenge. To identify and support these students, states will be partnering with other state agencies, instituting data systems that flag students in need of support, and providing wraparound supports like home visits and transportation that re-engage students in learning and support them at home.

- **Arkansas** is providing all LEAs with the [SmartData dashboard](#), an early warning and early intervention system that analyzes student achievement, discipline and safety data. Starting in fall 2021, LEA staff including counselors and PBIS staff will be able to use this dashboard to identify students who may benefit from MTSS supports, including bullying prevention and mental health services.

- **Connecticut** has launched the [Learner Engagement and Attendance Program](#) (LEAP), which focuses on the 15 highest-need LEAs to improve attendance and address chronic absenteeism. In partnership with the six state Regional Education Service Centers, LEAs and community organizations, the Connecticut State Department of Education has been conducting home visits to students and families to transition them back into school to finish the 2020-21 year, encourage them to attend summer learning programs and facilitate their transition back to school for the 2021-22 year.

- **Delaware** will be expanding mentoring and transportation programs for students in the foster care system, as well as targeting a portion of the Delaware Strategy for Accelerating Learning for Students to provide high-dosage tutoring specifically for these students. The Department will also develop strategies to address high absenteeism rates among students experiencing homelessness as part of its plan.

- **Hawaii** will use ARP ESSER funds to promote and expand programs such as Hawaiian education, performing arts, fine arts, music, computer science, STEM and project-based learning as a strategy to re-engage students. Special attention will be given to middle school students, who have had to adjust to a new mode of learning while experiencing the cognitive and physical changes of adolescence. HIDOE will also provide support and resources for parents and guardians to help them understand the changes their children are experiencing and acquire the skills to help support their children with their schooling.

- **Louisiana** will support LEAs in implementing a Dropout Early Warning System starting during the 2022-23 school year, which will collect data on student attendance, discipline,

academic measures and dropout rates. The Louisiana Department of Education is also partnering with Louisiana State University to re-engage about 16,000 students who missed in-person instruction or were not engaged in remote instruction. The partnership will hire 16 attendance specialists who will each locate about 1,000 students and assist them in school re-enrollment.

■ **New York** will continue its partnership with state agencies that support migratory students and students experiencing homelessness by providing technical assistance to LEAs to encourage the use of evidence-based best practices that close academic gaps, provide social-emotional support, and use a culturally responsive and sustaining framework. The Department also collaborates with the Office of Children and Family Services and LEAs to provide students in the foster care system with services, including transportation to ensure stability in students' school attendance despite changes in foster care placement.

## THEME III: BUILDING CAPACITY

Educators met the disruptive challenge of the pandemic with remarkable commitment, innovation and adaptability, but states expressed concerns that the effort has left teachers and support staff fatigued and in need of increased mental health support, which may lead to increased exits from the field and exacerbate educator shortages. Most states enacted emergency measures last year to address immediate staffing shortages, such as flexibility in certification, fast-track hiring processes, and recruitment efforts that prioritized cultural awareness and diversity.

**North Dakota** approved Administrative Rules in October 2020 to allow educators to teach "out of field" for two years while schools seek to find highly qualified teachers to staff hard-to-fill positions. Recent legislation also allows NDDPI to issue a certificate for special education technicians which creates a pathway for special education paraprofessionals to become special education teachers.

Plans focus on continued efforts to both accurately measure and address shortages and diversify the profession through new, expanded and adapted certification policies and pipeline programs. In particular, the pandemic highlighted the need for more qualified staff to support students' wellness. Professional development is a key component woven into states' unfinished learning and student health and wellness strategies, along with elevated focuses on supporting educators' own wellness and providing virtual professional learning options.

### *Certification and Licensure*

The nation was facing an educator shortage prior to COVID, and in many states that problem grew significantly throughout the pandemic. To deal with the critical shortage of educators, in 2020 many states relaxed certification protocols and/or granted emergency certificates to classroom teachers and other school staff.  Some states also invested in Grow-Your-Own (GYO) models to build a more locally-based educator pipeline, or worked with postsecondary institutions to develop more accessible and attractive pathways to teaching, counseling and other critical education areas. States also invested in programs and strategies to attract and retain teachers of color and support a more diverse educator workforce long-term.

- **Massachusetts** worked with the Governor and state legislature to pass a law to allow the SEA to issue emergency licenses to fill anticipated gaps. This license will help aspiring educators looking to join the profession, people who hold a license in one category (teacher, administrator, specialist teacher or professional support personnel) who have been prevented by COVID-19 from qualifying for a license in another category, and school districts looking to bring on new hires. The emergency license will be valid for employment in the 2020-21 school year and 2021-22 school year and will expire June 30, 2022.

- **Michigan** made addressing educator shortage a top priority with a range of options for LEAs. Districts may use their ESSER funds to boost staff salaries, invest in a GYO program to support their students who express interest in education or staff who aspire to be educators, and to support current teachers who want to teach in new subject areas. MDE has also approved several new educator preparation programs with residency models and waivers were granted to increase placement flexibility for teachers in special education programs.

- **West Virginia** developed a temporary program allowing college students finishing their education degrees to serve as substitute teachers to alleviate some of the staffing challenges districts have faced. The state legislature also approved a streamlined certification process, allowing candidates with a bachelor's degree who complete pedagogical training and pass the state subject matter test to become full-time teachers. This law went into effect in May 2021.

## *Build the Educator Pipeline*

Some states are working with their postsecondary institutions and other partners to attract and train teachers who are data-driven, technology savvy and culturally responsive. Many states are seeking to diversify their teacher pool, intentionally looking to recruit educators of color. Grow-Your-Own (GYO) models and grant programs were mentioned in many state plans as primary strategies to draw newcomers to the profession as early as high school, with some states developing their own models and others planning to leverage existing programs.

- **Illinois** has made the expansion and diversification of the educator pipeline one of its top priorities. ISBE is leveraging and aligning partnerships to improve educator recruitment and retention outcomes, including data-driven work with educator preparation programs to set and achieve specific diversity targets for recruitment and retention; collaboration with other education agencies to streamline articulation, promote dual enrollment and develop seamless curriculum for future educators from early college experiences through licensure; and support for residency programs and other proven preparation models that prepare candidates for high-need placements.
- **Kansas** will continue to work with higher education partners to develop pathways to the classroom that encourage diverse enrollment to increase diversity in the teaching field. The state has begun a pilot with the [Kansas City Teacher Residency](#) program to determine its effectiveness and will make recommendations to the state board later this year.
- **Missouri** will conduct a multi-year, statewide recruitment campaign. This effort will be augmented by a teacher recruitment and retention investment that will include district GYO grants and enhanced partnerships with educator preparation programs. Educator preparation programs will also expand and improve their recruitment efforts of individuals who have exited the PK12 system into alternative programs.
- **South Carolina** will collaborate with institutes of higher education, LEAs, and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to develop a pipeline of new talent with a specific focus on attracting people of color to the classroom. The collaboration will include support to the [Call Me MISTER](#) (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) Initiative, strengthening LEA teacher cadet programs and broadening support for the [SC Teaching Fellows Program](#).
- **South Dakota** is leveraging its existing Blue Ribbon Task Force to continue addressing educator recruitment and retention through increased teacher salaries, mentoring for early-career teachers, alternative certification pathways and the development of a paraprofessional certification pathway. These initiatives will enhance the state's multi-dimensional approach to strengthen the educator pipeline.

## *Professional Development*

States have laid out thoughtful plans to address the mental health and professional learning needs of educators and school staff. States plan to offer a variety of professional development options to prepare teachers to implement academic acceleration strategies, help them become more technology savvy and adopt culturally responsive strategies into their practice. States will also support the mental health and well-being needs of their teachers and school staff and prepare them to address the needs of students and families impacted by COVID. Some states

are providing training targeted to specific student groups, such as disabled students, at-risk students and Indigenous students.

- **The District of Columbia** will establish a self-service, interactive training platform with on-demand wellness resources available to all early childhood and K12 educators. The state agency will also make investments at the school level to support educator wellness structures and practices, and dedicate funds to efforts aimed at building more positive school cultures. DC has released a suite of resources and supports available on the School Culture and Climate Resource webpage to help LEAs build equitable and inclusive environments, trauma-informed practices and a restorative justice framework for addressing behavior challenges. OSSE also provides ongoing professional learning opportunities for practitioners and school leaders focused on proactive discipline supports, including trauma-informed approaches, social and emotional learning, restorative justice, equity and MTSS.

- **Georgia** hosted The Reimagining Education Conference, an intensive, highly collaborative conference with resources and best practices provided from teams across the agency, as well as state and district partners. Additionally, the work of successful practitioners from across the state were highlighted to promote possible district collaboration efforts, best practices, and innovative approaches to learning that can be replicated across the state.

- **Louisiana** is investing $1 million in the state's largest healthcare provider to provide all public school educators with access to free virtual teletherapy sessions conducted by qualified mental health practitioners.

- **New Jersey** is using ESSER funds to support a wide range of professional development focused on supporting student SEL needs and will provide additional resources for the mental health needs of both students and educators.

- **North Dakota** will provide all the state's educators with access to professional learning via LINCspring, an online system that offers high-quality, proven professional learning content, virtual access to expert coaches, more than 65 asynchronous learning modules, and dozens of real-time learning events. By providing statewide access, NDDPI will ensure equitable support of teaching and learning through personalized, immediate, ongoing and on-demand support for improving instruction.

## THEME IV: DATA AND FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY

The shift to remote instruction created data collection challenges for all states, particularly those that were unable to administer summative assessments during the 2020-21 school year. States shifted to collect other data about mode of instruction, enrollment and attendance, but many were unable to use that information to identify the students most in need of additional support. States are focused on remedying that problem and providing support to districts as they seek to measure the pandemic's impact on specific communities and student populations. Measures of student health and wellness are prominent in

**Tennessee** will fund additional assessments to support districts in identifying student and program needs and evaluating programs. For example, universal screener tools will provide real-time information for districts to make decisions regarding tutoring and summer learning and pre- and post- summer learning assessments.

some state plans with existing indicators receiving renewed attention or being integrated into frameworks and platforms. Most states are integrating efforts to monitor and evaluate ESSER-funded initiatives into existing frameworks while also increasing capacity at the state or district level. Some states are addressing financial sustainability by providing guidance or requiring multi-year spending plans.

### *Data Collection and Use*

States largely plan to use existing data structures such as summative assessments and state dashboards to measure impact and inform decision making. During the pandemic, states added methods for collecting data on the mode of instruction, varying from daily, student-level reporting to weekly, LEA-level data. States will use these data, combined with data on academic outcomes, attendance and other measures to identify students who have fallen farthest behind or missed more instructional time than average.

Some states are leveraging ESSER funds to launch new data and assessment efforts or to enhance efforts under development before the pandemic. One trend is the expansion of mental health, social, emotional and whole-child focused indicators and the use of Early Warning Data Systems, often in cross-agency coordination. Some states are adopting digital platforms, often as part of their efforts to transition to high-quality instructional materials and/or virtual learning platforms that provide just-in-time data and adaptive learning. States plan to support educators in understanding and using these data through targeted professional development, needs assessments and support in collecting new data using surveys and measures of social and emotional well-being.

- **The District of Columbia** will use a portion of the Emergency Funds set-aside to speed up improvements to its data system, including laying the groundwork for the collection of course-level data, expanding access to early childhood data to support kindergarten readiness data and building technical assistance resources aimed at building LEA data capacity.

- **Iowa** will collect and report Conditions for Learning, a survey that measures student perceptions of engagement, safety and school environment. All student-level data can be disaggregated by student group.

- **Michigan**'s Return to Learn legislation required districts to identify educational goals expected to be achieved for learners during the 2020-21 academic year for all student subgroups. The statute also requires that the state provide benchmark assessments at no cost to districts to administer to all pupils in kindergarten through eighth grade within the first nine weeks of school and again before the end of the school year to measure proficiency in reading and mathematics. These data will be shared with the SEA and integrated into reports that show student group performance. LEAs will use student-level data to adjust programming as appropriate; the SEA will also provide technical assistance to all LEAs to support student group performance. In grades eight through ten, students will take the PSAT, and eleventh grade students will participate in the Michigan Merit Exam.

- **Montana** encourages its LEAs to frequently use multiple data sources to monitor the implementation of strategies aimed to improve students' academic, social, emotional and mental health outcomes. LEAs will adjust strategies in real-time rather than waiting for the end of the semester or year, using sources like interim and benchmark assessments, parent and student interviews and surveys, grades, engagement and discipline data, family monitoring and student self-monitoring.

- **New Jersey** is requiring each LEA to complete a needs assessment of students and educators that includes descriptions of root causes, qualitative and quantitative data sources used to define the needs and how ESSER funds will be applied, with specific consideration for supporting the social, emotional and mental health needs of both students and educators.

- **South Carolina** created the RALLY Tool to provide teachers with timely and comprehensive information about students' needs. The platform takes all historical summative and interim assessment data and creates displays for teachers. The data can be accessed on a student, classroom, school or district level, and are linked to the state's standards to directly connect the data to content. This platform will be linked to the state-supported digital curricula resources made available to districts.

- **Utah** is conducting a comprehensive set of studies to understand the effects of pandemic-related disruptions on students' academic performance in order to examine overall trends in participation and achievement; identify LEAs, schools and student groups most affected

by disruptions; and document the influence of the pandemic on already-existing achievement gaps.

## *Evaluation and Measurement*

States are relying on their deep experience in communicating, meeting and monitoring federal funding requirements to comply with ESSER expectations by integrating progress and fiscal monitoring into existing systems. Some states are developing initiatives to evaluate the effectiveness of specific strategies through partnerships with higher education institutions or other vendors; others cite the need to bring on additional staff to manage this effort. A few states will rely primarily on existing data, such as summative assessments and attendance.

- **Hawaii** will launch a three-year study beginning with the 2021-22 school year to identify the impact of the use of the ESSER funds and determine if the funds used addressed students' needs as intended. The proposed study will track the progress of a cohort of incoming first graders, whose kindergarten year was disrupted by the pandemic, as well as the incoming sixth graders as they progress through middle school. This will allow HIDOE to assess the impact of the strategies and interventions implemented on students' academic, social, emotional and behavioral performance.

- **Georgia** is developing a public data dashboard to track how LEAs use ESSER funding, as well as hiring five additional staff to provide grant monitoring, technical assistance, budget approval and subrecipient monitoring services.

- **Missouri** will be implementing Ed-Fi, a system that will bridge gaps between the 555 LEAs' existing data platforms, make data more user-friendly, and ensure that both the data and the data analysis are as accurate as possible. The Department will also continue to use data analysis and visualization tools to make public reports more useful to stakeholders.

- **North Dakota** will hire four retired educators to monitor ESSER implementation, as well as using data from state assessments, Choice Ready, student engagement surveys and graduation rates to identify schools that need the most support and what their highest priority needs are. This information will be publicly available on the Insights Dashboard and will be disaggregated by student subgroup to target resources to students who need them most.

- **Rhode Island** will engage contracted support for data analysis, sharing and research related to COVID recovery and implementation of projects funded by ESSER. RIDE will also build capacity through strategic partnerships for assessment-specific data analysis and support, including DataCenter dashboards that enhance SEA capacity to consistently support the field. Given the increased opportunities for participation in summer programming, RIDE will also acquire term-limited staffing to oversee backend enrollment operations on the state's EnrollRI system.

### *Long-Term Funding Sustainability*

Long-term sustainability of new programs and structures is a major concern for states, recognizing that a fiscal cliff will follow the end of ARP funding. A handful of states require LEAs to outline multi-year spending plans, and others provide guidance on strategically spacing spending across the three-year allowable window. Some state plans are using ESSER funds to support new or expanded strategies codified in legislation, raising the need to secure long-term funding sources, such as state funds, to support these initiatives after the expiration of ESSER funds.

- **North Dakota** is encouraging and supporting LEAs to develop multi-year spending plans to help them avoid recurring costs and a financial cliff in 2024, instead maintaining a long-term financial forecast. The SEA recommends that LEAs should plan to spend 40% of funds in the SY21-22 school year to expand, scale and serve more students with proven programs and strategies existing in their schools, while spending 30% in SY22-23, 20% in SY23-24, and 10% in SY 24-25 to "supplement state and other federal funding sources to maintain effective programs."

- **Rhode Island** is working to communicate and strongly encourage all LEAs statewide "to think deeply and creatively about blending, braiding, and strategically leveraging" their Title allocations (Title I, II, III, IV-A, IDEA) alongside ESSER funding. RIDE program teams will assist LEAs with questions and consideration of options as they think through new or innovative approaches to supporting students in a way that leverages this unique moment while being fiscally responsible.

- **Washington** has required its LEAs to closely monitor disparate outcomes between different student subgroups as they develop their plans, including by collecting disaggregated data for each subgroup, specifically identifying and addressing disproportionate impacts of the pandemic, and using an equity analysis tool while developing their plans. This equity analysis can include an examination of who is most affected by policies, how policies do or do not advance equity, which dimensions of identity are and are not represented among decisionmakers, and how strategies can be adjusted over time to match changing community needs.

# Conclusion

Moving through and past the COVID-19 pandemic will be a massive undertaking for students, educators, families and states. The influx of federal funding creates a unique opportunity for states to tend to their immediate challenges while simultaneously building for the future. Realizing these goals will require an unwavering focus on equity, committed state leadership,

ongoing stakeholder engagement, a culture of continuous improvement and a steady drumbeat of innovation.

The themes elevated in this analysis reflect commonalities across what was written in state plans, but does not fully capture everything states are doing to support students, educators and communities. State plans are full of complex strategies that do not fit neatly into these themes, and the template provided by the Department of Education shaped what states reported in their ARP plans. States' approaches to recovery and leveraging ARP funding will continue to evolve, and as the students and communities most impacted by the pandemic are identified, new needs will emerge. Over time, as LEAs submit their localized plans, states will also gain a clearer and more detailed picture of the variety of evidence-based strategies being implemented.

The examples contained in this memo represent just some of the hard work going on nationwide, and are provided to inform state-level thinking and create opportunities for dialogue. CCSSO invites states to share more details as their plans take further shape, and to use this memo to foster collaboration and discussion.

# Appendix

This memo is based on an analysis of state plans that were submitted to the United States Department of Education by the end of June 2021. All states are required to distribute a minimum of 90% of their total allocation to districts and can reserve no more than 10% for use at the state level. Of that 10% set-aside, states are required to reserve at least 5% for interventions to address learning loss, 1% for summer enrichment programs, and 1% for comprehensive after-school programs.[1] The 35 plans referenced in this report are linked below, along with their ARP ESSER allocation amounts. If a state is not listed below, it is because the state submitted its plan after the end of June or is still working to submit its plan to the U.S. Department of Education. For that reason, it was not included in this initial analysis.

| State | Total ARP ESSER Allocation | Minimum LEA Distribution (90%) | Maximum SEA Reservation (10%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alaska | $358,707,134 | $322,836,421 | $35,870,713 |
| Arkansas | $1,253,227,833 | $1,127,905,050 | $125,322,783 |
| Connecticut | $1,105,919,874 | $995,327,887 | $110,591,987 |
| Delaware | $410,733,965 | $369,660,568 | $41,073,397 |
| District of Columbia | $386,317,154 | $347,685,439 | $38,631,715 |
| Georgia | $4,249,371,244 | $3,824,434,120 | $424,937,124 |
| Hawaii | $412,328,764 | $371,095,888 | $41,232,876 |
| Idaho | $439,942,041 | $395,947,837 | $43,994,204 |
| Illinois | $5,054,988,054 | $4,549,489,249 | $505,498,805 |
| Iowa | $774,516,216 | $697,064,594 | $77,451,622 |
| Kansas | $830,585,182 | $747,526,664 | $83,058,518 |
| Kentucky | $2,084,773,157 | $1,876,295,841 | $208,477,316 |
| Louisiana | $2,605,463,325 | $2,344,916,992 | $260,546,333 |

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[1] Data and details are pulled directly from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Methodology for Calculating Allocations

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maine | $411,303,282 | $370,172,954 | $41,130,328 |
| Massachusetts | $1,830,128,073 | $1,647,115,266 | $183,012,807 |
| Michigan | $3,719,833,128 | $3,347,849,815 | $371,983,313 |
| Missouri | $1,956,529,215 | $1,760,876,294 | $195,652,921 |
| Montana | $382,019,236 | $343,817,312 | $38,201,924 |
| New Hampshire | $350,501,633 | $315,451,470 | $35,050,163 |
| New Jersey | $2,764,587,703 | $2,488,128,933 | $276,458,770 |
| New Mexico | $979,056,256 | $881,150,630 | $97,905,626 |
| New York | $8,988,780,836 | $8,089,902,752 | $898,878,084 |
| North Dakota | $305,266,879 | $274,740,191 | $30,526,688 |
| Ohio | $4,472,067,097 | $4,024,860,387 | $447,206,710 |
| Oklahoma | $1,493,582,570 | $1,344,224,313 | $149,358,257 |
| Oregon | $1,121,028,734 | $1,008,925,861 | $112,102,873 |
| Rhode Island | $415,015,610 | $373,514,049 | $41,501,561 |
| South Carolina | $2,112,051,487 | $1,900,846,338 | $211,205,149 |
| South Dakota | $382,019,236 | $343,817,312 | $38,201,924 |
| Tennessee | $2,487,638,081 | $2,238,874,273 | $248,763,808 |
| Texas | $12,418,588,778 | $11,176,729,900 | $1,241,858,878 |
| Utah | $615,526,070 | $553,973,463 | $61,552,607 |
| Washington | $1,852,501,071 | $1,667,250,964 | $185,250,107 |
| West Virginia | $761,417,928 | $685,276,135 | $76,141,793 |
| Wyoming | $303,709,391 | $273,338,452 | $30,370,939 |