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# What the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Means for Education Equity

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The Education Trust

# How did we get here?

- **March 2020:** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ([CARES](#)) Act provided \$30.75 billion for education, including \$13.2 billion for K-12 education and \$3 billion for governors to use on education
  - Colorado [received](#) about \$121 million for K-12 education
- **December 2020:** The Coronavirus Response and Relief and Supplemental Appropriations and Relief ([CRRSA](#)) Act provided \$82 billion for education, including \$54.3 billion for K-12 education and \$4 billion for governors to use on education
  - Colorado [received](#) about \$519 million for K-12 education
  - Most states and [LEAs](#) are still in the process of spending this funding (which must be used by September 30, 2023)

# Education Stabilization Fund in the American Rescue Plan Act

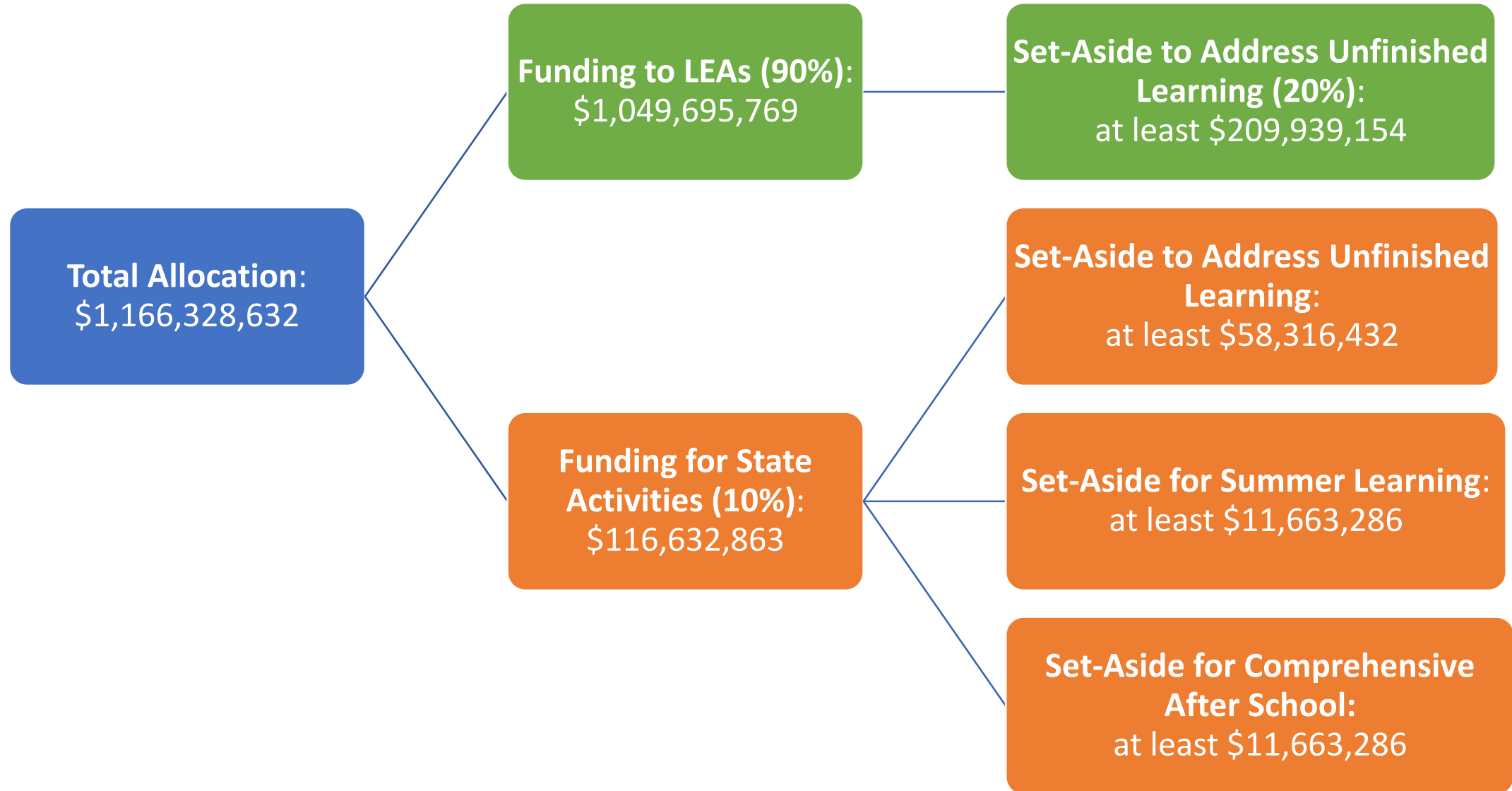
# Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund III

- **\$122.8 billion** distributed to states and LEAs based on the share of Title I funding they receive under ESSA
  - Also provides **\$2.75B in emergency funding assistance to non-public schools**
  - States must meet **maintenance of effort requirements**, and states and LEAs must meet **maintenance of equity requirements**
- U.S. Department of Education has already released two-thirds of the funding to states (and released [SEA application](#) for rest of funds on April 21)
- [CO](#) has published initial [LEA allocations](#)
- Funds must be used by **September 30, 2024**

# Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund III

- States may keep up to 10% of the money they receive; **90% must go to eligible LEAs**
- **What's New:** Specific set asides **for evidence-based strategies to address unfinished instruction**, targeted to underserved students
  - 5% minimum set aside for SEAs
  - 20% minimum set aside for LEAs
- There are additional set asides for SEAs:
  - 1% set aside (\$1.25B) for "evidence-based" summer programs
  - 1% set aside (\$1.25B) for comprehensive, after-school programs

# How much funding is Colorado receiving?



# How can funding be used?

- Within 30 days of receiving funds, **LEAs must release a plan that includes information about returning to in-person instruction.** Before making the plan publicly available, **the LEA must seek public comment on the plan**
- **LEAs are not required to reopen as a condition of receiving funds**
- Funds **can be used flexibly**, including to:
  - address the impact of significant interrupted instruction, including addressing students' academic, social and emotional needs;
  - prepare schools for physical reopening (e.g., sanitation, COVID testing);
  - facility repairs and improvements, including projects to improve air quality in school buildings;
  - purchase education technology;
  - provide mental health services and supports, including though the implementation of evidence-based full-service community schools and the hiring of counselors; and
  - other activities authorized by existing law

# Targeted Investments

- **Students Experiencing Homelessness:** Provides states with \$800M for wraparound services for homeless children and youth
- **Students with Disabilities:** Invests approximately \$3B into programs funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **Native American Students and Tribal Communities:** Provides \$850M to the [Bureau of Indian Education](#) for bureau operated schools, tribally controlled schools, and tribal colleges and universities
- **Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education:** Provides \$90M to the U.S. Department of Education to support these programs
- **Broadband Access:** Provides \$7.1B for home broadband connectivity and devices for K-12 students through the E-Rate program
- **AmeriCorps Tutors:** Provides \$1B for the Corporation for National Community Service and the National Service Trust to support, in part, an increase in tutors trained through AmeriCorps
- **Head Start:** Provides \$1B to states to fund Head Start programs
- **Child Care:** Provides \$14.9B for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and another \$23.9B for childcare stabilization funding
- **Child Tax Credit:** Expands [eligibility](#) to 27 million children (including roughly half of all Black and Latino children); raises the maximum credit from \$2000 to \$3000 for children between the ages of 6 and 17 and up to \$3600 for children under 6; makes the credit fully-refundable
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP):** Extends the 15% increase in benefits through September 2021
- **Pandemic EBT Program:** Authorizes the program, to operate this summer, the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, and during any school year and subsequent summer in which a public health emergency is declared



# What should you be asking LEAs about how federal stimulus funds will be used?

LEA leaders must target these new resources to the students who need it most, and leverage this federal investment to drive significant change in our education system. It is critical that local stakeholders, including students, families, community members, advocates, and educators, remain vigilant to ensure these funds are not used to just do more of the same that would lead us back to a world of “pre-COVID” inequity.

# Key Questions to Ask LEA Leaders

1. How is the LEA **meaningfully engaging a diverse and representative set of stakeholders** – including students, families, educators, and the broader community – in developing a plan to use these funds and implementing that plan?
2. What **data will the LEA use to identify student needs** – including needs that were unmet prior to the pandemic – and **monitor how students are progressing**?
3. How will the LEA **ensure funding is targeted to the students who need it the most**?
4. How will the LEA **target additional resources, including federal stimulus funding, to create safe and equitable learning environments and provide whole child supports**, particularly for vulnerable and systematically neglected students?
5. How will the LEA implement **evidence-based strategies to address unfinished instruction**?

#1: How is the LEA meaningfully engaging a diverse and representative set of stakeholders – including students, families, educators, and the broader community – in developing a plan to use these funds and implementing that plan?

- ❑ **Create and sustain a regular feedback loop** with students, [families](#), educators, and community members, including advocates.
- ❑ **Engage a diverse and representative set of stakeholders in developing local plans** to use additional federal and state funding, **including to implement strategies to accelerate student learning** that draw on successes and innovations from the community and are evidence-based, culturally affirming, and designed to ensure equity and meet the needs of all learners, including English learners and students with disabilities
- ❑ **Provide training and financial support to schools** to create or sustain meaningful student, family, and community engagement.
- ❑ **Conduct outreach to community-based organizations serving high-need communities** to draw on their expertise, share needed resources, and educate and inform families and advocates about new resources available, including opportunities to accelerate student learning and meet students' social, emotional and academic needs.

#2: What **data** will the LEA use to identify student needs – including needs that were unmet prior to the pandemic -- and monitor how students are progressing?

- ❑ **Use data to identify the current state of equity** within the school district so the district can disrupt patterns of inequity.
- ❑ **Provide timely, accessible, transparent, and ongoing data for each school, grade, and student group on student achievement and a broad array of other opportunity-to-learn data**, including data on instructional model (e.g., remote, hybrid, in-person) and instructional time; student and teacher access to technology; chronic absenteeism; use of exclusionary discipline, results from student, staff, and family surveys of school climate; access to advanced coursework; and access to strong and diverse educators.
- ❑ **Identify short- and long-term goals based on data** to assess district and school progress and to determine whether the district's plan is addressing student needs and improving equity in your district. **Publicly report on progress to these goals at least annually.**

### #3: How will the LEA ensure funding is targeted to the students who need it the most?

- ❑ **Equitably distribute additional federal funds to schools.** Per-pupil allocations of federal stabilization funds should be greater in schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care.
- ❑ **Shield the highest-need schools from cuts in resources, including funding and staff and salaries** – as required under the maintenance of equity provisions in ARP – and programming.
- ❑ **Ensure federal funding is used to support vulnerable and systematically neglected populations.** While the ARP provides some specific funding to support the needs of [students experiencing homelessness](#) and [students with disabilities](#), much of the funding is flexible. That means district leaders have an opportunity and responsibility to direct funding toward uses that will specifically meet the needs of underserved students.

## #4: How will the LEA target additional resources, including federal stimulus funding, to create safe and equitable learning environments and provide whole child supports, particularly for vulnerable and systematically neglected students?

- Protect – and where possible, expand – district funding for whole child supports, including social, emotional, mental, and physical health and development.** This must include additional funding for school counselors, psychologists, and other mental health providers, especially in high-need schools.
- Provide guidance and support, including high quality professional development, to educators and school leaders on fostering the strengths and assets students have built over the past year,** while also providing the supports students need given the challenges they face (e.g., wraparound services, culturally sustaining and justice-focused curricula, and positive discipline practices).
- Invest in a coordinated districtwide effort to identify and proactively re-engage students** who were not connected during interrupted learning.
- Prohibit the use of suspensions and expulsions for minor offenses; use ARP funding to move away from policing in schools and to support restorative practices; and, in the 19 states where it is still allowed, ban the use of corporal punishment.**
- Prohibit the use of exclusionary discipline practices in virtual learning settings,** such as blocking students from virtual learning platforms or suspending their school email accounts, for minor offenses (e.g., dress code violations).
- Use federal stimulus funds, as well as state funds, to invest in proven strategies for recruiting and retaining a well-prepared, diverse workforce,** given the research that teachers of color make a difference for all students, especially [students of color](#).
- Collect data to monitor how the LEA and schools are spending ARP dollars.** And make this data public!

## #5: How will the LEA implement evidence-based strategies to address unfinished instruction?

- ❑ **Partner with, community-based organizations who work with students** to ensure all students, particularly students of color, students living in poverty, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, students in the foster care system, students who are incarcerated, undocumented students, and students who identify as LGBTQ, have access to high-quality opportunities to learn and grow after school and over the summer.
- ❑ **Re-engage high school students who have fallen off-track to graduate and who need additional support to navigate the transition to college and career.** This could include investing in dual enrollment programs and CTE programs that are tailored to local needs and careers of the future and expand college and career counseling and financial aid support.
- ❑ **Use data on student outcomes and other measures of student well-being** to inform decisions about which schools or groups of students will be prioritized for accelerated learning interventions.
- ❑ **Provide training and ongoing support to school leaders to implement accelerated learning strategies in ways that will positively impact students,** such as using data to identify areas of unfinished learning; training and supervising tutors and/or teachers; selecting curriculum and instructional materials that are aligned to high standards, appropriately challenging for students' grade level, and culturally sustaining; organizing the core part and any additional time in the school day to maximize learning; and fostering positive relationships between students and adults in the school.
- ❑ **Provide sample schedules** to help schools identify ways to maximize and target instructional time for the students who need it the most.
- ❑ **Regularly evaluate and adjust plans** to ensure students are equitably and effectively getting the supports they need to succeed.

For more on critical decisions district and school leaders must make on how to implement evidence-based strategies to accelerate learning, visit: <https://edtrust.org/strategies-to-solve-unfinished-learning/>

# Additional Resources



# Additional Resources

- [Targeted Intensive Tutoring](#) (Ed Trust)
- [Expanded Learning Time](#) (Ed Trust)
- [The Importance of Strong Relationships](#) (Ed Trust)
- [Resource Equity District Diagnostic](#) (Alliance for Resource Equity)
- [COVID-19: Toolkit for Districts and Schools](#) (Education Resource Strategies)
- [ED COVID-19 Handbook: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs](#) (U.S. Department of Education)
- [U.S. Department of Education Resources on the ARP](#)
- [“And they cared”: How to Create Better, Safer Learning Environments for Girls of Color](#) (Ed Trust; National Women’s Law Center); includes district checklist