



### **ESSE 3 American Rescue Plan Federal Funding to Minneapolis Public Schools Recommendations**

We believe Minneapolis Public Schools can and should set a new bar for education equity in schools, using federal funds not only to accelerate learning, but to address pre-existing needs and barriers.

We urge MPS to develop a visionary plan for spending state funds.  
We offer 4 key recommendations:

**1. Ensure support for students who have been historically underserved. While funds will be distributed through the Title 1 formula, this does not guarantee that students will be effectively targeted or that programs will be designed through an equity lens.**

**a.** Prioritize programming to meet the unique academic recovery needs of students with special needs, English Learners, students who are homeless or highly mobile, foster youth, and other groups that have faced significant barriers to learning during the pandemic.

**b.** Require intervention for students who meet certain metrics. The scale of ARP investment means that MPS has no excuses for leaving students behind. MPS should develop targets for identifying students that must be offered supplemental programming to meet academic, socio-emotional, and other needs.

**c.** Systems in place to gather regular feedback from students and families—focusing on those who have faced the greatest barriers during the pandemic, including students of color, students from low-income families, English Learners, students with disabilities, and others.

**2. Launch aggressive plans to address learning loss. Implement significant short-to-medium-term programming to help students recover from two school years of interrupted learning. Partner with programs that have a track record of success, elevating service contracts with providers who can support quick program expansion as a best practice.**

b. Go beyond the required 20% allocation for learning loss. This federal floor helps ensure that a portion of ARP funds are used to address critical student needs. MPS should be encouraged to spend as much as possible on supplemental student supports.

**3. Launch an effort to track progress toward COVID recovery that includes clear metrics and community feedback loops. Over the past year, young Minnesotans have made incredible sacrifices to ensure the health and safety of their families and our communities. We know that communities of color and Indigenous communities have been disparately impacted across many measures. We need a clear roadmap laying out where we are today, and a path forward that ensures these communities are not left further behind.**

a. MPS should invest in specific types of training that can help educators better serve students, such as:

i. Innovative pathways to the classroom. ARP funds can support expansion of programs, including Grow Your Own, Black Men Teach and other targeted alternative programs with a track record for increasing teacher diversity and addressing teacher shortages. MPS should make a 3-year investment in these programs to help move the needle on the state's teacher diversity goals.

ii. Literacy training. Despite a large body of research supporting science-based methods of early reading instruction, many educators report they did not learn these skills in teacher preparation. ARP gives MPS the opportunity to address this critical need, advancing understanding of the science of reading and ensuring standards-aligned curriculum and instruction through professional development. MPS should invest in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training.

iii. Restorative practices. Students will need intensive social emotional support as they recover from the pandemic. It will be more important than ever for teachers to have the skills to support them in constructive ways. MPS should invest in restorative practice

iv. Data literacy. Many teachers report that they haven't received training on how to use annual tests to improve their teaching and help their students. MPS should develop and roll out professional development to ensure that teachers are empowered with the tools to understand and act on key metrics to inform their instruction and better support students during the COVID recovery process.

**4. Address long-standing barriers to academic success. Student needs coming out of the pandemic may be more pronounced, but many have existed for decades and are long-standing contributors to Minnesota's opportunity gaps.**

**a. Invest in early literacy programs:**

Literacy is an essential academic foundation, with a strong link between high school graduation and third grade reading proficiency. Unfortunately, many students are not on track and this has only been exacerbated over the past year. MPS should focus on ensuring that K-3 students have the support they need to develop this foundation despite significant disruption during a critical window.

Expand and deepening partnerships to support literacy.

**b. Support targeted and culturally responsive mental health support:** In addition to focusing on measuring and addressing learning loss, MPS should simultaneously invest in supporting students' mental health that is student-centered, and offers culturally responsive supports. We highly encourage MPS to identify ways to partner with community-based providers with existing expertise in culturally relevant youth mental health services to make this effort as effective and impactful as possible.

**c. Provide support to English Learners and their families.** Distance learning has been particularly challenging for EL students, and we encourage MPS to provide targeted support to schools with high concentrations of EL families, as well as guidance on the types of interventions that can help these students most.

**d. Ensure intensive support for students with disabilities.** The shift to distance learning was catastrophic for many students receiving special education services, with many receiving minimal supports and facing significant barriers to essential academic and other special education needs. In addition to new IDEA funds available through ARP, MPS can and should use ESSER funds to ratchet up services to students eligible for special education services, including behavioral and mental health services, technology assistance, additional paraprofessional support, and priority access to extended and supplemental learning opportunities.

**Please find additional context and examples in the appendix below.**

**We hope that it can serve as inspiration as MPS takes on the important task of leading the next phase of Minnesota students' pandemic recovery process.**

## **Appendix**

There is a growing body of evidence around what works to accelerate learning.

The Annenberg Institute at Brown University has a series of research briefs that contain recommendations on how to ensure that students—particularly those traditionally underserved—are

getting the proper support for academic acceleration.

**This includes:**

- High-dosage tutoring,
- Student surveys,
- Extended learning days and years,
- Integrated wraparound services,
- Professional development for teachers,
- Teaching grade level content, and more.

**In addition, Minneapolis should look to explore how other states have invested the first two rounds of ESSER and GEER funds to identify promising practices to replicate:**

**Academic Acceleration**

- Hawaii invested \$6 million in summer learning and afterschool programming meant to help students who have been negatively impacted by learning loss.
- New Jersey created a \$2.5 million grant for 16 districts to implement, scale-up, and enhance evidenced-based intervention to accelerate students' academic progress.
- Arizona invested \$20 million in Acceleration Academy Grants dedicated to extra support for high-needs schools. Schools can use grants to fund extra math and reading specialists, paraprofessionals, or other supports for remediation and acceleration.
- Alabama dedicated \$26 million to provide additional support to address achievement gaps and another \$9 million for intensive before-and-after school tutoring.

**Early Literacy**

- Massachusetts allocated \$10 million for early literacy programs that provide additional support to K-3 students. The programs are meant to address learning loss and accelerate the reading skills of students from historically underserved communities.
- Tennessee invested \$100 million—\$60 million which was from COVID-19 federal stimulus—in a “Reading 360” statewide program to support access to tutoring and online support to help students develop literacy, professional development for teachers, and phonic kits and materials for classrooms.

**Mental Health**

- Nevada invested in wraparound services. The effort supports organizations with a track record of successfully partnering with schools to provide wraparound services, including mental health and social-emotional development.

- Tennessee invested \$1.5 million to develop an online tool that maps community resources available to support mental health and related services for students.
- Utah used their money to provide additional funding for mental health partners for additional services to students, professional development on trauma responsive practices, tele-mental health services for families, and a digital tool to assess mental health needs.
- Florida invested \$2 million in telehealth for districts. The effort includes mini-grants to all districts to help train counselors, social workers, and school psychologists in how to deploy telehealth and inter-agency partnerships to coordinate with other ongoing efforts.

### **Ten Things Parents Should See in Classrooms and/or Their Living Rooms**

- **Individualized learning plans** for each student to include academic, social and emotional growth and well being.
- **Extended learning opportunities** that meet your child's comprehensive needs. This includes targeted tutoring with results being communicated to parents and teachers.
- **Equitable access to technology** including: high speed internet; technology and maintenance of technology; training and development opportunities for students and families.
- **All materials and equipment** should be high quality and provided to parents at no cost.
- **Curriculum that is inclusive** of Black, Indigenous People of Color's (BIPOC) perspectives and histories that is vetted by parents & community representatives.
- **Teacher and staff knowledge and approach that is human centered;** culturally proficient and sustaining; trauma aware and informed; restorative; and supports English language development.
- **Frequent communication** regarding each student's comprehensive progress using fair and monitored grading practices.
- **College, Career, and Vocational Education opportunities** that are indicative of the needs in the marketplace/capitalistic economy.
- **Services provided** per the terms of your students 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- **Learning environment that is inclusive and safe.**

### **Ten Things Parents Should See in Schools**

- **A team of experts, including parent(s) and students, who are providing a clear plan to address:** 1) your child's safety; 2) learning acceleration based on individual student needs; 3) comprehensive professional development; 4) comprehensive diagnostic assessments to measure academic, social and emotional needs of students.
- **Development of new Individualized Education Plans and 504 plans** for re-entry to be adapted for each student (both general matriculating students and students with special needs) approved by a parent or guardian.
- **Free breakfast and lunch programs** (and when possible dinner) available for easy pickup.
- **Personal protective equipment** (masks, hand soap and/or sanitizer) as a part of distribution with a plan to extend these resources for the next 24 months.
- **Additional critical staff** such as school guidance counselors, masters-level social workers, school psychologists, and other professionals who will provide direct student support.
- **Family Resource Center in person and/or online** to identify all potential resources (government and community based) available to support children and families.
- **Partnerships with local organizations** to lead wellness check-ins on students who may need support or may be experiencing harm or abuse at home.
- **Multilingual access**, including the translation of all materials and resources (including hotlines) developed in response to COVID-19 for Non-EFL families into Spanish and other commonly spoken languages.
- **Flexible daily schedules and yearly calendars** that accommodate the needs of children to fully participate in learning acceleration.
- **Funding and spending to ensure equitable access** to resources shown to be fundamental to a quality education. A clear financial accountability framework must be put in place to ensure that the funds are being used for their intended purpose with an external forensic or fiscal audit conducted when deemed necessary. Funding decisions must be: evidence based on research of intended target group; focused on student benefit and not system benefit; targeted to provide cultural congruence with ethnically matched providers; and meet the needs of at-risk students and target funds to the neediest students who are historically chronically under resourced.

### **Stable Homes Stable Schools**

- **MPS** should invest some ESSE funds to reach more families in schools like Emerson.