



Evidence-Based ESSER Resources

[Expanded Learning Time: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically \(learningpolicyinstitute.org\)](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org)

Research Points to Key Elements of Effective Expanded Learning Time Programs

States and LEAs can support effective ELT programs by providing resources and additional flexibility or supports and structures, as appropriate. The ELT program types described below can meet ARPA's evidence, responsiveness, and disproportionate impact requirements while addressing learning recovery.

Summer programs

Many types of summer programs have been found to be effective for all grade levels, including programs focused on social and emotional well-being, employment and career development, and academic learning. Research shows that effective, high-quality summer programs are characterized by:

- **Responsive design:** Programs are designed to meet student and community needs and include academic support as well as enrichment activities like art, sports, or science exploration.
- **Appropriate duration:** Programs are of sufficient length to make an impact, typically a minimum of 5 weeks. Programs are more effective when attended for multiple summers, which federal relief funds make possible.
- **Stability:** Programs include stable, trained, and well-compensated staff and ensure consistent, stable participation by students. To address summer staffing shortages, some districts are tapping partnerships with educator preparation programs to hire recent graduates, offering bonuses, and/or partnering with community-based organizations.

After- and out-of-school programs

Research shows that effective, high-quality after-school and out-of-school programs are characterized by:



- **Connection:** Both after-school programs and Acceleration Academies, which are held during scheduled school breaks, connect to students' work in school. This connection helps students master the curriculum they have been studying and look ahead to the curriculum they will encounter when school resumes. Programs also create opportunities for youth to connect with each other and with adults.
- **Relevance:** After- and out-of-school programs may have more design and content flexibility than the typical school day to connect to students' real-world experience and community, a strategy shown to make learning more engaging and effective.
- **Partnerships:** Programs often reflect strong, meaningful partnerships between schools and community-based organizations.

Tutoring programs

Economists find that high-quality tutoring is one of the more cost-effective strategies to promote accelerated student learning. Research shows that effective, high-quality tutoring programs are characterized by:

- **Trained tutors:** Tutors are a group of individuals—teachers, paraprofessionals, college students, or others—who are prepared for specific tutoring strategies, rather than a cadre of ever-changing, untrained volunteers.
- **High-quality materials:** Tutors use a well-developed curriculum with frequent formative assessments to move students along a learning progression.
- **Consistency:** Tutors work consistently with individuals or small groups of students.
- **Frequency:** Tutoring occurs at least 3 days a week for at least 30 minutes in groups of no more than five students.
- **Integration:** Tutoring occurs as part of the regular school day and schedule when possible, or regularly after school.

Particularly in the wake of COVID-19, ELT programs should also take a whole child approach by prioritizing the social and emotional needs of students, who may be experiencing increased levels of anxiety, grief, and uncertainty about the future due to the pandemic.

[Expanding Early Childhood Education: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically \(learningpolicyinstitute.org\)](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org)

Federal Recovery Funds Can Be Used for ECE in School- and Community-Based Settings



Early childhood education (ECE) programs provide one of the highest returns on investment of any educational spending. Quality ECE programs can help reduce special education placements and improve children’s readiness to learn.

Federal recovery funds can be used to fund ECE programs for children from birth through kindergarten, consistent with ESEA. These programs can be located on school campuses, but they can also be in community-based settings in a district’s attendance zone, including local Head Start, child care, and preschool programs. States and LEAs may use CRRSAA and ARPA funds for ECE in many ways, including:

- Classroom-based instructional programs
- Salaries and benefits for teachers and other staff
- Extended-day programs in Head Start or community-based child care programs
- Professional development for early childhood professionals who serve Title I–eligible children, including providers in non-school settings
- Summer enrichment programs for young children and their families
- Support services, such as nutrition, vision, dental, and counseling services
- Screening and diagnostic assessments
- Transition programs
- Parental involvement initiatives and home visiting programs
- Transportation
- Data collection and sharing

Some investments, such as professional development and summer transition programs, may be better suited to one-time funding than others.

[Investing in Community Schools: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically \(learningpolicyinstitute.org\)](http://learningpolicyinstitute.org)

Community Schools: A Federally Approved Approach to Improve Student Outcomes

Research shows that community schools contribute to student and school outcomes ranging from improvements in student attitudes and attendance to achievement and attainment, yielding up to \$15 in social benefits for every dollar invested. These schools have proved especially important for underserved students and families.



Community schools provide a wide range of well-coordinated supports and services for young people and their families in a trusting and collaborative setting. This approach qualifies as an evidence-based intervention for schools identified as needing support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Research shows that community schools contribute to student and school outcomes ranging from improvements in student attitudes and attendance to achievement and attainment, yielding up to \$15 in social benefits for every dollar invested. These schools have proved especially important for underserved students and families, who experience higher rates of economic insecurity, food scarcity, and mental health challenges. This is critical given that, even before COVID-19, more than half of the nation's schoolchildren (25 million) lived in low-income households. Community schools partner with students, families, educators, community agencies, and local government to address these challenges head-on by establishing trusting relationships and providing well-coordinated services and supports.

The Evidence-Based Pillars of Community Schools

While the specific programs and services at each community school vary in response to local context, there are four evidence-based community school pillars:

1. **Integrated student supports** for academic needs, mental and physical health, nutrition, and social services.
2. **Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities**, including after-school and summer learning opportunities and through internships and project-based learning.
3. **Active family and community engagement** through meaningful partnerships, as well as classes, services, and events.
4. **Collaborative leadership and practices**, including shared decision-making structures, such as site-based leadership teams, and professional learning communities for educators.

Using Federal Funds for Community Schools

Community schools can be supported with CRRSAA and ARPA funds, as they are an allowable use under Titles I, II, and IV of ESEA (see below). ARPA underscores this by specifically identifying "full-service community schools" as an allowable use of funds to support student mental health. Additionally, the 20% of



LEA funds set aside for learning recovery under ARPA, as well as state set-aside funds, can be used to support community schools, including by providing expanded and enriched learning time. Examples of high-leverage uses include:

- **Establishing an infrastructure for planning and support**, such as collaborative district teams to share in decisions about how to design and implement new community school initiatives; county- level staff to help establish systems-level partnerships; and district-, county-, or state-level staff to provide technical assistance to community school sites.
- **Hiring community school coordinators and other school staff (e.g., family outreach workers, social workers)** to manage the provision of services, including coordinating partnerships with nonprofit and government agencies.
- **Conducting collaborative assets and needs assessments** to identify existing resources on-site and in the school community, as well as the academic, social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of students, families, and school staff.
- **Supporting schools in implementing programs and services aligned to the four pillars**, including:
 - *Integrated student supports*, such as broadband and device access, on-site food pantries and meal delivery, health and mental health services, and counseling and other trauma- informed supports.
 - *Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities*, such as after-school and summer programming staffed by teachers or community partners, and tutoring.
 - *Active family and community engagement*, such as training and compensating staff to make home visits and developing culturally and linguistically relevant communications.
 - *Collaborative leadership and practices*, such as convening school-level partners, identifying and tracking shared outcomes for student success, and assessing and improving program quality.
- Convening a learning community for school-level and initiative-level partners to share best practices and address common problems.

[Supporting the Educator Pipeline: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically \(learningpolicyinstitute.org\)](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org)

Investments in the Educator Workforce Address Urgent and Long-Term Student Needs



Teacher shortages were widespread even before the pandemic, with more than 100,000 positions left vacant or staffed by underqualified individuals in 2017–18 alone. COVID-19-related burnout and workloads have raised concerns about increased turnover, and in the 2020–21 school year more than 40 states reported shortages of teachers in high-need areas, such as math, science, and special education. All this comes on top of a long decline in annual enrollment in educator preparation programs (EPPs), which has fallen by more than 30% over the past decade (see Figure 1), largely due to concerns about cost, student loan debt, and the lack of competitive compensation for teachers.

Not only are many teaching positions filled by underprepared and inexperienced educators, but these educators are disproportionately concentrated in schools with higher percentages of the nation's most underserved students: students from low-income families and students of color. These long-lasting inequities in educator preparation and experience are substantially responsible for persistent and pervasive opportunity gaps. Meanwhile, over the course of the pandemic, teacher shortages have only deepened, potentially exacerbating these systemic issues.

Federal Recovery Funds Can Support Comprehensive Educator Preparation

Strong educator preparation is critically important to support improved teacher effectiveness and retention and improved student achievement. State and LEA investments in comprehensive educator preparation are allowable through multiple routes.

Teacher Residencies

Recovery funds can be used to create and support teacher residency programs consistent with allowable uses through ESEA. High-quality residencies are characterized by features such as district–university partnerships, candidate financial support, and yearlong comprehensive clinical experiences tightly linked to coursework. Research suggests that residencies produce effective educators who stay in teaching at higher rates and who are, on average, more racially diverse than new teachers prepared through other routes, an important feature



given the growing research base on the benefits of a racially and linguistically diverse workforce.

Under ESEA, residency programs must offer at least a year of preservice training, including instruction in subject-area content and in pedagogy. Funding can be directed to new or existing programs. Current residency programs—including those described in state ESEA plans—can serve as models for new investments.

Grow Your Own programs

Another application of recovery funding comes through the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act allowable use for high school teacher career pathways, a type of Grow Your Own (GYO) model focused on long-term workforce development and diversification. Examples of such programs with records of promising results include the Recruiting Washington Teachers program and the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program. A wider range of GYO program types can be funded under ESEA allowable uses, including routes that provide paraeducators, other school staff, community members, and career changers with training and support to earn teacher certification.

Preparation for special education teachers

Shortages in special education teachers are among the most acute and long-standing nationwide. Through IDEA, LEAs can use ESSER and GEER funds to support preparation and professional development specifically for special education teachers. Also among allowable uses of funds in IDEA are investments to establish or improve preparation partnerships between districts and EPPs and to create routes for paraprofessionals to become special education teachers, another variation on the GYO model.