



Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE

August 9, 2022

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Council Releases Guides to Help Urban School Districts Assess Investments of Federal Relief Funds

WASHINGTON, August 9, 2022 – One year after publishing [Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively](#), the Council of the Great City Schools has released a set of follow-up [Interim Progress Assessment Guides](#) to help member districts evaluate their investment and implementation efforts to date.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) enacted by the Biden Administration last year was the single largest investment in federal elementary and secondary education in the nation’s history. To help support districts in the investment planning process, the Council established a diverse national task force of urban education leaders and support staff to develop guidance for urban school systems across the country in the planning and use of federal funds to protect student health and safety, address student learning needs and mental health services, and to maintain and upgrade school facilities.

School districts are now roughly one year into their federally-funded relief and recovery efforts—a milestone that the Council’s Executive Director Ray Hart sees as an opportunity for school and district leaders to assess their progress. “This funding has provided urban school systems with unprecedented funding they needed to support students and build their long-term capacity,” he stated. “These relief funds come with intense public scrutiny over the ways we choose to invest our time and resources. One year later, we need to step back and make sure we are on the right track. We need to talk to our teams, talk to our peers. We need to refine our work where needed, and recommit ourselves, if necessary, to the overarching goals of supporting our most vulnerable students and advancing educational excellence and equity.”

This series of documents aims to provide a framework for this assessment process. The guides are specifically designed to help district leaders and staff assess their investments or activities in specific areas. These areas include investments in technology; investments in operations and facilities; investments in leadership development and staff capacity; and investments in instructional materials, programming, and services. In addition, there are guides for assessing the strength of a district’s financial management of federal funding; communications and outreach efforts around its investment strategy; research and evaluation of the effectiveness of investments; and school board oversight of ARP spending. District teams can use these Interim Progress Assessment guides as a checklist to review their current strategy.

Each document opens with a summary of the guiding principles and considerations provided last year. The guides then pose a series of questions to help districts assess their investments or work in a specific area, as well as questions about how the district is tracking and measuring the effectiveness of investments and communicating outcomes. As Hart notes, “These will be critical considerations in the coming months and years, as districts are called on by their communities, lawmakers, and the general public to provide evidence that federal funding has led to improved student outcomes.”

Each document concludes by identifying a set of ‘warning indicators’ – problematic approaches or developments based on guidance last year on what to avoid. If a district’s investments or activities meet any of these criteria it should signal to district leaders the need to rethink or refine their investment strategy.

These documents are available on the Council’s [website](#).

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