Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

JUNE 2021

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Council of the Great City Schools

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 77 large-city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban education and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth.

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Interactive design. Suggested resources (e.g., publications, websites, etc.) are hyperlinked throughout the document and can be accessed by clicking on the resource images and hyperlinks. Additionally, readers can navigate through by clicking on the section titles in the table of contents, the Ishikawa diagram on page 7, and the navigation tabs above section headers. While the document can be printed, reading on an electronic device is recommended.

Introduction and Overview

Public education, its students, and the professionals who work in our school systems and schools have had one of the most difficult years in the history of the institution. A global pandemic has shuttered the nation's schools for much of the current school year and portions of the last; sidelined the instruction of many of the country's most vulnerable children; and re-exposed gaping racial, language, and disability inequities in the educational opportunities of many of our children. Experts have estimated that many students, particularly in our major urban public schools, have lost months of instruction and suffered significant social and emotional damage because of the prolonged isolation. Others worry that the toll may set back the economic and employment prospects of not only the individuals immediately affected but the nation at large.

Still, the nation's public schools remain one of the most valued and trusted institutions in the nation. Despite uneven federal and state decision-making, our Great City School leaders often provided a steadiness to the public discourse that reassured a fearful and sometimes angry citizenry. Urban public schools also proved their worth to the public at large during the crisis by delivering millions of meals to those most in need in their communities; narrowing the digital divide by purchasing millions of electronic devices for students and expanding broadband access; and safeguarding the safety and health of students and staff with aggressive mitigation efforts. At the same time, the nation's urban school leaders spoke out on issues of race and racism that were roiling the country in the wake of the George Floyd and other police killings.

That centrality of public schools to the nation's welfare led the U.S. Congress and President to approve three tranches of funding over the last year to help stem the virus, reopen the economy, and address widespread unfinished learning among students resulting from the pandemic. The first tranche came in March 2020 and amounted to some $13 billion for the nation's elementary and secondary schools. The second tranche came in December 2020 and amounted to approximately $54 billion. And the third tranche was signed into law in March 2021 and amounted to some $122 billion. (See Appendix A.)

This unprecedented infusion of federal funds into our public education system was badly needed by school systems that had spent billions on mitigation efforts of all kinds, meals, and devices. The funding also came at a critical time as schools and school systems were tackling the academic challenges that the pandemic is leaving behind. At the same time, the new dollars will test the ability of school systems to properly manage and allocate the funds in ways that most effectively address student needs and demonstrate that the

federal investment was worthwhile. And the resources will give our school systems the breathing room they need to rethink and reimagine how the institution could better serve our students in the years to come.

The purpose of this document is to lay out a framework for the nation's large city school systems to spend these new federal dollars strategically and effectively. It sets out overarching goals for the use of funds; articulates broad investment strategies; defines principles for the effective use of funds; and asks a series of questions that leaders and stakeholders should ask themselves as they embark on planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. The document also draws on lessons learned from previous infusions of federal dollars and summarizes the main provisions of the federal legislation and agency guidance.

> We ask a series of broad questions, present considerations, make recommendations for investments, and suggest things to avoid based on best practice and our extensive work with districts.

In a series of topical briefs, this framework then proposes major investments or "best bets" in the areas of teaching and learning, technology, and facilities. In each area, we ask a series of broad questions, present considerations, make recommendations for investments, and suggest things to avoid based on best practice and our extensive work with districts over the years. Moreover, the document articulates various systemic considerations that school districts need to address in the areas of finance and budgeting, research and evaluation, and communications and public engagement. Finally, it lays out the role of school boards in monitoring the work, and it identifies several key performance indicators to assess progress.

This document was designed as a toolkit of resources and recommendations, not necessarily as a report that needs to be read cover to cover. Given the breadth of the topics presented, we encourage district staff to review the overarching goals and principles of sound investments, and to then delve into the sections that are most useful and relevant to their work. This resource can also be used in conjunction with guidance[1,2] released by the U.S. Department of Education.

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1   American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, 86 F.R. 21195 (Apr. 22, 2021) (to be codified at 34 C.F.R. pt. Chapter II). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-04-22/pdf/2021-08359.pdf

2   U.S. Department of Education. (2021, May). *Frequently asked questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs/ Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e-03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf

The Ishikawa diagram below lays out the main components of this document and how they fit together.

Teaching and Learning

Investments in Staff Capacity and Human Capital

Instructional Materials and Resources

Investments in Student Support Services

Addressing Mental Health and Social-Emotional Wellness in Students and Adults

Finance

Finance Guidance and Recommendations

Mock ESSER Spending Plan

• Overarching Questions
• Lessons Learned from Large Federal Infusions
• Goals and Principles

Funds Optimization to Address Pre- and Post-Pandemic Student Needs

Digital Resources to Support Instruction

Information Technology and Broadband Access

Strategic Spending in Facilities

School Board Guidance and Considerations

Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Guidance

Public Engagement and Communications Planning

Technology

Operations

Community Engagement

Click on section title to read.

This document does not try to do everything. We have stayed away from listing items that one might purchase with these funds for two reasons. One, there is an endless number of programs, products, and services that districts could buy. And two, we wanted to encourage districts to think more strategically about what they were trying to achieve and what strategies would help them attain their goals. We do not want to encourage districts to draw up lists of things to buy and then try to fashion a rationale behind them; instead, we urge districts to think purposefully about how these new resources could help them meet broad goals. To that end, we implore district leadership and stakeholders to use this document to plan and support investments cross-functionally, systemically, and deliberately.

Despite the many issues that urban public schools have encountered since the onset of the pandemic, they are better prepared now to address them than ever before. They are now armed with considerable new resources to help them meet their goals. They have a partner in the new Administration and U.S. Department of Education that wants to see them succeed. They have experienced less turnover than might be expected given the challenges faced over this very difficult year. They have formed stronger inter-organizational bonds during the last year and a half that have allowed them to jointly problem-solve in new and unique ways. And they are receptive—if not eager—to rethink old notions about what works in urban education. This document was designed to help our nation's urban schools meet a new future and take full advantage of the many new opportunities for success that lie ahead.

> We implore district leadership and stakeholders to use this document to plan and support investments cross-functionally, systemically, and deliberately.

Emerging Investment Goals, Strategies, and Principles

Overarching Goals: High-Level Outcomes for ESSERs Investments

The Council of the Great City Schools and its Task Force on Federal Funds Optimization[3] suggest that districts use their new American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to meet the following goals—

Safely reopen schools for all students.

Address pre- and post-pandemic unfinished learning.

Build lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning.

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3   See Appendix D for task force members and contributors.

High-Level Strategies

To attain those goals, the Council and its Task Force propose that districts build their efforts around the following main strategies—

Attend to the immediate health and safety requirements as well as the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and adults.	Ensure grade-level, standards-aligned instruction with just-in-time academic and social-emotional supports.	Invest in staff capacity, lasting infrastructure, and technology that closes the opportunity, resource, and digital divides and ensures equitable outcomes for all current and future students.

Emerging Principles and Considerations

In working on how to attain your goals and implement your strategies, keep in mind the following principles and considerations—

PLANNING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

1. **Go slow to go fast:** *Resist the pressure to rush to create a plan.*

   ❊ Take the time to build a coherent and focused plan using a cross-functional team of stakeholders to address current needs and lay a foundation for long-term acceleration of student achievement.

2. **Plan engagement:** *Think deeply about who is at the table.*

   ❊ Engage a range of stakeholders: students, teachers, families, school leaders, board members, central office staff, research and evaluation teams, community leaders, and university, business, and civic partners. If available, leverage existing structures, such as parent, student, staff, and community advisory councils and task forces.

   ❊ Launch two-way collegial and community communication.

   ❊ Consider listening sessions with students and families that include those who have had a variety of experiences, learning contexts, needs, and outcomes over the past year. Carefully plan agendas and share materials (in a variety of formats and languages) in advance so individuals come to meetings prepared to discuss the research, articles, and ideas presented.

   ❊ Explore participatory budgeting processes.

   ❊ *Equity lens:* Ensure that schools and students who need more targeted support are represented in the planning process and receive the resources they need to attain district goals.

   ❊ *Teaming:* Carefully designate and define the purpose, membership, roles, responsibilities, and deliverables within and across various working groups. Additionally, clearly articulate who is making the final decisions and how the input/feedback garnered will be used.

   ❊ Harness the heightened engagement of parents and families that resulted from the pandemic and transform it into an ongoing district practice and new opportunities for meaningful family engagement in service of increasing equitable access to academic opportunities.

3. **Conduct an equity-focused, student-centered needs assessment:** *Gather baseline data to capture current conditions and identify priority needs of students.*

    ✳ Craft a disaggregated snapshot of the needs of students by gender, grade level, socioeconomic status, English learner status, and level of participation in instruction during the pandemic.

    ✳ Possible data points include attendance, grades, assessments, samples of student work, surveys, and focus group feedback. (Always use multiple measures and both quantitative and qualitative information.)

4. **Leverage your research department and partners on the front end.**

    ✳ Include the research department, local university, and/or research partners during this initial planning and throughout the project.

DEFINING YOUR GOALS

5. **Plan with the end in mind and build for the future.**

    ✳ Define your goals, state your commitments, and be clear about what problems you are trying to solve.

    ✳ Define outcomes, measures, metrics, and evidence on the front end. Tracking the use of funds and return on investment (ROI) will be critical to reporting and evaluation. Districts will want to demonstrate to Congress and the public that these funds were used well and produced measurable student outcomes.

    ✳ Determine how you will keep track of the use of funds; implement the budget and accounting system on the front end.

6. **Do not start from scratch:** *Build from the best of your current vision, mission, goals, values, and strategic plan.*

    ✳ Align investments to the district vision, mission, goals, and values. Craft a theory of action for each investment.

    ✳ Consider your current strategic plan for existing promising initiatives that would benefit from additional resources (e.g., larger scope, additional depth and support, accelerated timeline, etc.).

    ✳ Be critical of how well projects have worked to date, for what target groups, and why.

    ✳ Examine your current strategic plan with a critical eye. Be willing to change or revise based on new data or experience from this past year.

    ✳ Ensure that there is coherence across strategic and tactical plans. Avoid bombarding schools with many disparate projects and initiatives.

    ✳ Create structures to support cross-functional collaboration so that departments routinely communicate with one another.

7. **Use an equity lens:** *Target investments to match needs and disrupt systemic inequities.*

    ❋   Use a framework to establish explicit, high universal expectations for all students, while implementing the systems of supports needed for all student groups to be successful.

    ❋   Attend to your community's multifaceted and varied experience of loss and trauma. The context for this federal investment is different from past economic recovery investments.

    ❋   Consider creating a school-level and/or student-level COVID-19 response *Equity Index* to drive equitable allocation of funds based on the pandemic's impacts.

    ❋   Capitalize on the new forms of family engagement that brought families more into the educational space as they supported their children to access virtual education. Establish more formalized parental engagement structures or processes to aid in the work to disrupt systemic inequities, thereby empowering families and expanding opportunities for students.

8. **Build capacity:** *Invest in building staff knowledge and skills to have both immediate and long-term impact on student outcomes. Invest in educational infrastructure. Retain high performers. Develop homegrown talent pipeline programs.*

    ❋   Ensure that internally-developed professional learning for instructional staff is focused and coherent, high quality, sustained, and supported to build knowledge of content, how to address unfinished learning and accelerate student learning; and fosters professional collaboration for continuous improvement.

    ❋   Attend to these same principles if writing an RFP for externally-developed professional learning. Ensure that any external professional development adheres to the district's priorities and that district staff acquire the knowledge and skills to support future professional development in the areas addressed in the RFP.

    ❋   Consider investments in systems and supports that might be necessary for successful school-based or student-based programming.

    ❋   Invest in talent management structures to recruit, select, train, retain, and grow high performers.

9. **Focus on core instruction:** *Put more funds into improving Tier I instruction than remediation programs.*

    ❋   Invest in the core educational infrastructure, including district curriculum guidance, instructional materials, assessment, and aligned, high-quality, and coherent professional learning.

    ❋   Align all work to state learning standards that develop essential learning across grade levels, assessments, and district/school curriculum expectations for what quality teaching and learning look like. Ensure quality curriculum guidance adheres to the CGCS seven key features.[4]

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4   Council of the Great City Schools. (2019, October). *Curriculum quality rubric: A self-assessment tool for districts.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Curriculum%20Quality%20Rubric.pdf

10. **Be student-centered:** *Ensure grade-level learning ignites student engagement, motivation, and builds on students' assets.*

* Use asset-based language and incorporate approaches that enable students to embrace a "growth mindset." Ensure all students feel seen, known, and cared for.

> Use asset-based language and incorporate approaches that enable students to embrace a "growth mindset."

* Hold all district and school staff collectively responsible for the outcomes of each student, including students most affected by the pandemic.

* Be wary of vendors that claim to have the magic solution. All too often, their materials are drill and practice on low-level skills that do not support access to grade-level content or state standards, which may lead to students falling even further behind their peers.

* Build a system that ensures all students have access to advanced coursework and opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to participate successfully in advanced courses.

11. **Strive for high-leverage, high-impact investments, or promising practices with a track record of success.**

* Anchor instructional investments in essential learning, providing grade-level content and instruction while addressing unfinished learning with just-in-time supports.

* Assess where staff at all levels of the organization need to enhance their knowledge and skills.

* Invest in research-based strategies and carefully tailor programming to the district's context without losing fidelity to what works.

12. **Embrace systems thinking:** *Watch for disjointed projects, initiatives, or products.*

* Ensure coherence exists across strategic and tactical plans. Avoid bombarding schools with too many disparate projects and initiatives.

* Think whole and part, and then whole again. Consider how various initiatives fit together. Connect the pieces and communicate this coherence to stakeholders.

* In site-based districts, be sure there is a process to ensure expenditures are tied to the strategic plan, are properly vetted, and monitored for contributions to student progress.

* Create structures for departments to communicate with one another.

Plan a Three to Five Year Spending Timeline that Invests in Longer-Term ROI

13. **Focus, prioritize, and sequence.**

* Focus on implementing a few high-leverage investments exceptionally well.

* Choose priorities wisely and go deep. Only then should the district move to the next initiative. Systems can only handle so much change; people can only learn and become exceptional at so many things at once.

* Be end-user-centered. Think about individuals (e.g., the third-grade teacher, the algebra student, the middle school principal, etc.). Map all initiatives by user to understand collective impact.

14. **Manage change:** *Guide stakeholders throughout the process.*

   ❊ Clearly communicate the vision, goals, expectations, and outcomes. Build shared definitions and a common understanding of terms and vocabulary used to describe the work.

   ❊ Demonstrate how the initiatives are connected to the mission and vision, how they fit together to achieve end goals, and what success will look like.

   ❊ Be explicit, be transparent, frequently engage with internal and external stakeholders, and build systems for feedback, all focused on well-defined goals.

   ❊ Develop clear roles and responsibilities, both internally and externally. Share the purpose, roles, responsibilities, and timelines repeatedly with all internal and external stakeholders.

15. **Ensure sustainability.**

   ❊ Be methodical in spending so there is no last-minute rush to expend funds. Consider planning "through the funding cliff" (i.e., a five-year funding plan of which three years are financed by ESSER).

   ❊ Beware of the funding cliff. Because of the Tydings amendment, ESSER I funds end September 30, 2022; ESSER II funds end September 30, 2023; and ESSER III funds (ARP) funds end September 30, 2024.

   ❊ Plan for turnover. Build your bench; identify and develop successors for key roles. Plan for new staff to be successfully onboarded during and after these investments.

   ❊ Give priority to building internal instructional capacity rather than purchasing services that will no longer be available at the end of this federal funding period.

   ❊ If external organizations are to be used, plan how their services can be incorporated into the district work to transfer their expertise to district staff. Require all external personnel and materials to be aligned to the district's vision, mission, values, goals, frameworks, and standards.

Questions and Considerations for Seeing a New Future, Prioritizing Investments, and Ensuring Programmatic Cohesion in How You Spend Your ARP Dollars

Building on the overarching goals and principles for optimizing federal COVID-19 relief funds, district leadership teams may want to consider the following set of questions as they envision their futures, set their spending goals and priorities, weigh their investment options, develop implementation plans, secure internal and external buy-in, and consider the long-term impact and sustainability of their investment strategy.

Goalsetting and Prioritization

❈ What do you see as the main purpose of the ARP funds coming to the district? Have you set clear goals for what you really want from these dollars and what they can help you accomplish? What problems are you trying to solve? How are you re-envisioning and reimagining your district for a new future? How might you deploy these funds to help move you toward that vision?

❈ How do the priorities you have set for using ARP funds complement or diverge from your district's overarching vision, mission, goals, and strategies? Have you been clear why any divergence is needed?

❈ If your overarching goals are to address unfinished learning, safely reopen schools, and build equitable systems for teaching and learning in the future, how does your district's plan for the allocation of ARP funds reflect these goals?

  – For example, how does your spending strategy signal that your priorities are students and addressing their unfinished learning?

  – Is there evidence to the contrary that skeptics might cite?

❈ How does your overall spending plan advance equity and access?

❈ Are your spending priorities built around pressure group demands or around student needs?

❈ When thinking about how to use these temporary but large sums of ARP dollars for unfinished learning, how are you addressing the needs of struggling students, English learners, students with disabilities, and other students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic? How are you addressing the social-emotional needs of students as well as their academic achievement?

Making the Right Investments

✳ What data are you using in the main areas where funds might be used (e.g., instruction, facilities, technology) to make your decisions about how to deploy those dollars? Do not let the data paralyze you. Consider ways to sequence and stage actions based on immediate and long-term needs.

✳ What are the pros and cons of each of the investment options you are considering? Pros and cons should include academic, return on investment, political, and implementation considerations. Consider all possibilities.

✳ How do instructional investments under consideration add value, compliment your current programming, or build capacity to enhance grade-level instruction versus investments that simply add more "things" to what people have to do?

Effective Planning and Collaboration

✳ Who is missing from your planning table that will be instrumental in ensuring your plan is comprehensive, coherent, and equitable? Does everyone have a voice? Does everyone meet together?

– For example, sometimes the directors of English learners programs, special education, transportation, and information technology are not on the superintendent's cabinet, but they will be needed in this discussion.

– Similarly, in considering new instructional devices and technology equipment, have you adequately coordinated with the instructional team on what programs work with those devices and support the implementation of academic priorities?

– Have you involved a team of teachers to help plan and pressure test how things will work at the school and classroom levels?

✳ Have you given yourselves the time you need as a team to think through options carefully? Do you have a strategy for managing the stress on individual team members as you go through the decision process?

✳ Is your team planning together or in silos? How are you resolving differences of opinion? How have you been clear that the team will be held accountable for working together across functions and areas of responsibility to ensure a coherent process and strong collaboration?

✳ How will you address any ramifications of programs or other funding options for your facilities, bus routes, school meals, and technology infrastructure? How do these pieces fit together?

✳ As you think about how to invest in professional development to boost the capacity of academic staff, are you considering the training needs of operational staff, IT staff, and others who may need support with new equipment, procedures, and devices?

✳ In general, are you using "if/then" decision-making? Can you "chunk" your decision-making into manageable pieces without fracturing how you see the big picture?

Ensuring Engagement and Buy-in

❋ What is your game plan for articulating to staff, teachers, and others in the organization the need for the investments you are making and how it will benefit them and the students they are responsible for? In other words, what kind of change management process have you developed?

❋ How are you communicating to stakeholders the rationale behind your spending plan and working to build broad-based support?

❋ How confident are you that your community will see your priorities the same as theirs? What evidence do you have for this? Will your community see your spending priorities defined around children *or* things and political interests?

❋ How do you plan to communicate with all stakeholders? How are you leveraging your existing communication channels, platforms, and structures? What new ones do you need to create?

Long-Term Impact and Sustainability

❋ What are the consequences of your investment strategy for students, parents, and stakeholders in six months, a year, two years, three years, or beyond? What are the consequences for short- and long-term public confidence in the district?

❋ How do your investments build capacity, coordination, and collaboration among your workforce to provide better service to students and families, and are you confident that this capacity can be sustained after the funds run out?

❋ How confident are you that your deployment of resources will not add long-term spending liabilities that the system cannot cover once the funding ends?

❋ How have you planned to sequence the work and the investments across the three years of funding? Do you have timelines for the work in each area, and do those timelines fit together in ways that are complementary?

❋ Do you have feedback loops designed at each level of the organization in ways that would provide regular feedback on what is working and what is not? Is your planning team set up to discuss and resolve problems and make adjustments in a coherent way?

❋ What measures will you use on both an interim basis and end-of-three-year basis to determine progress on your goals and priorities and for reporting to the public? How will you track the measures over time?

❋ Do you have a process to track spending with ARP funds across all areas of investment?

Investing in Teaching and Learning: Staff Capacity, Instructional Materials, and Student Support Services

To help districts in their investment planning, this section provides a set of **six questions for identifying high-priority, high-leverage investments in teaching and learning.** For each question, we provide guidance on how the inquiry process should drive district planning, as well as **common pitfalls a district should avoid** in creating a thoughtful, forward-looking instructional investment strategy.

We then look at the **three main categories for high-leverage instructional spending**—

1. Building instructional staff capacity

2. Purchasing instructional materials and resources

3. Providing student support services

We provide a rationale for investment in each area, a brief summary of lessons learned from the field, recommended action steps for planning and implementation, and what to avoid.

Six Questions for Identifying High-Priority, High-Leverage Expenditures to Improve Teaching and Learning

District leaders or teams charged with developing an instructional spending plan should ask the following six questions about any given expenditure—

1. How does this investment address current and long-term student needs?

❋ Implicit in this question is the need to study what achievement patterns, indicators of social-emotional wellness, and quality of student work reveal about the current level of learning and support for students,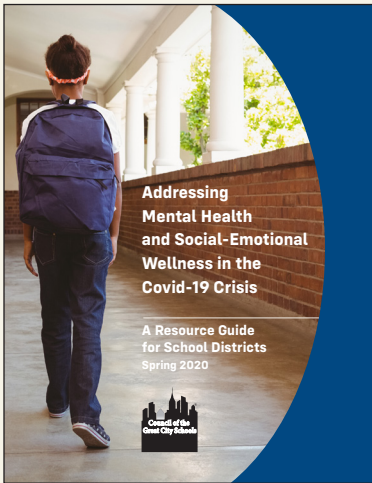 and how this looks for different groups of students across schools. The process of setting investment priorities should therefore begin with **a comprehensive assessment of student academic and social-emotional needs**[5] based on a clear vision of how the district defines student success, quantitative and qualitative data on the current strengths and weaknesses in instruction and mental health support systems, and how a potential investment will address these needs and build sustainable systemwide instructional capacity.

❋ District planning for investments should **employ best practices in strategic thinking and decision-making** (such as the "5 Whys"[6] process of root cause analysis) and **connect proposed initiatives to expected outcomes** using logic models and the articulation of a clear theory of action.[7]

❋ In defining the student needs to be addressed with relief funding, districts should involve key stakeholders to ensure that **equity is emphasized** in their overall instructional investment strategy and that the plan **prioritizes the most vulnerable students and those who have been disproportionately impacted** by the COVID-19 crisis and school closures.

❋ To address current instructional needs, resources or programs should be **anchored in essential learning standards**[8] **and explicitly address unfinished learning**[9] within the context of grade-level content, rigor, and acceleration in Tier I instruction that reflects the district's vision and beliefs about teaching and learning.

❋ Investments should build on what we have learned over the past year about the role of technology in supporting student learning inside and outside of the classroom. A district's investment strategy should address the skills, resources, or infrastructure required to **advance the effective use of educational technology, expand access, and support the distance or blended learning models** that are likely to persist both in the immediate future and in years to come.

5   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020). Addressing mental health and social-emotional wellness in the Covid-19 crisis. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/CGCS_SocialEmot_Resources.pdf

6   School Reform Initiative. (n.d.). The 5 whys for inquiry. http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/5_whys.pdf

7   Center for Educational Leadership. (n.d.). Creating a theory of action tool. https://info.k-12leadership.org/creating-a-theory-of-action

8   Student Achievement Partners. (2020, June 6). Priority instructional content in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. https://achievethecore.org/page/3267/priority-instructional-content-in-english-language-arts-literacy-and-mathematics

9   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, June). Addressing unfinished learning after COVID-19 school closures. https://www.cgcs.org/CMS/LIB/DC00001581/CENTRICITY/DOMAIN/313/CGCS_UNFINISHED%20LEARNING.PDF

✳ Answering this question also requires districts to look at long-term student needs that will only be met through investments that **build the quality of Tier I instruction and expand access to high-quality curriculum content and social-emotional learning for all students** as part of the district's multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS).

WHAT TO AVOID

How does this investment address current and long-term student needs?

✳ Investments with no clear relevance to the academic, social-emotional, or mental health needs of students returning to school during or after the COVID-19 pandemic.

✳ Investments unlikely to improve the quality of Tier I instruction and social-emotional learning moving forward.

✳ An investment strategy that relies on remedial instruction and interventions.

✳ Investments that do not meet the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

✳ Investments that do not provide the supports necessary to guarantee access to grade-level standards and instruction for students with diverse learning needs, such as English learners and students with disabilities.

2. **How does this investment advance the strategic plan and instructional priorities, vision, mission, and goals of the district?**

✳ This question should prompt district teams to adopt the kind of systems thinking discussed in this document. While there will be a temptation to consult department wish lists of investments or tackle backlogs of delayed expenses, each expenditure should **explicitly reflect the district's overall strategic plan and priorities and connect with/reinforce other investments.** Programs, materials, or strategies that are funded with relief aid should ideally fit together into a coherent campaign of improvement that **builds the capacity of school leaders, teachers, and support staff rather than bombarding them with disjointed initiatives or resources**.

✳ This question should lead to a discussion of whether instructional investments reflect the mission and values of the district, including a commitment and **explicit focus on equity, access, and supports for diverse learners and those students most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**. Investments should therefore enhance or create academic and social-emotional learning experiences that translate the district's mission and values into classroom practice.

✳ District investment strategies should continue to build on the **outreach and involvement of parents and families**, which was a critical component in supporting student learning during the pandemic and will continue to drive the success of the district's instructional vision and goals.

> Each expenditure should explicitly reflect the district's overall strategic plan and priorities and connect with/reinforce other investments.

How does this investment advance the strategic plan and instructional priorities, vision, mission, and goals of the district?

✳ Investments in programs, materials, or strategies that are not aligned to the district's strategic plan and send mixed signals to schools regarding the district's overall instructional vision.

✳ Investments that do not reflect the district's commitment to equity, access, support for diverse learners, and the engagement of parents and families.

✳ Investments in disconnected, contradictory, or redundant programs that place an undue burden on staff time, attention, and resources.

3. **What do we know already about the efficacy of this investment or the likelihood that a new, innovative initiative will be successful?**

   ✳ In weighing investment decisions, districts should consider resources, projects, or programs that are **backed by educational research or are considered best practices** in the field.

   ✳ Any proposed investment should be accompanied by **evidence that supports the efficacy of the product, program, or approach in improving desired outcomes**.

   ✳ Public scrutiny over the way districts use these new funds will be greater than ever, so districts should **take the lessons of the past into account** and ensure they **invest in approaches or resources with the best possible chance of success in improving student outcomes**. For example, our experience as big-city school districts with outsourcing tutoring on a large scale without district guidance and monitoring under the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) program of NCLB revealed such investments were ripe for mismanagement and exploitation, and ultimately produced little in the way of student gains.

   ✳ Having a **communication plan that clearly articulates the rationale, evidence-base, and ultimate decision for purchases** will help establish transparency with the public and get in front of presumptions of distrust and mismanagement.

What do we know already about the efficacy of this investment or the likelihood that a new, innovative initiative will be successful?

✳ Investments in programs, materials, or strategies without any clear evidence of efficacy or track record of success in improving student outcomes in urban schools.

✳ Making investment decisions based solely on evidence from organizations or companies that have a stake in selling the district a product or service.

✳ Investments in programs, materials, or strategies not possible to effectively support and monitor when implemented at scale across a large school system.

✳ Making investment decisions without full transparency and open communication with stakeholders about the rationale and purpose of expenditures.

4. **What will it take to implement this program or strategy effectively and equitably?**

   ❋ Answering this question will require districts to not only investigate the logistical, procurement, and planning considerations for a given investment, but to ensure they have the "**right people at the table" for planning and implementation**. This question should therefore prompt a discussion that includes staff and leaders from departments across the organization and school representatives.

      – For example, if a coaching program requires new school-based staff to be hired, or the redeployment or retraining of current staff, this conversation would benefit from the input of the human resources department, as well as a cross section of district and school staff and leaders to help think through staffing and other practical implementation needs and concerns, as well as plans for when funding ceases in three years.

      – Likewise, for digital materials and instructional technology, the IT department will be a critical partner, ensuring everyone has a shared understanding of what resources are supported by the technology infrastructure the district has in place, or what will need to be updated or enhanced to support a particular device or resource.

      – Staff from the English Learners, Special/Exceptional Education, and Equity departments and teams of teachers should also be involved in any decision-making, planning, or materials selection process to ensure materials or programs meet the needs of ALL students, and to help the district think through any work that needs to be done to ensure equitable access for diverse learners.

WHAT TO AVOID

What will it take to implement this program or strategy effectively and equitably?

   ❋ Investments in programs, materials, or strategies that the district lacks the capacity to implement or will struggle to support effectively.

   ❋ Making investment decisions without involving a broad cross section of district staff and teachers to provide insight on what is needed for planning and implementation.

   ❋ Failing to communicate how the investments are improving equity and learning outcomes for students.

   ❋ Investing in and attempting to implement an initiative or program without adequate professional development and thoughtful rollout.

   ❋ Making narrow investment decisions that fail to optimize economies of scale or miss opportunities to enhance supports for various student groups or to improve instruction across content areas.

5. **How will this investment be sustained or continue to build district capacity after the three years of relief funding ends?**

<div style="float:left; background:#5a1a4d; color:white; padding:1em;">
Be clear about how external vendors' services advance the long-term instructional vision and transfer the expertise to district staff.
</div>

❋ This question should prompt district teams to think deeply about how they plan to **sustain the benefit of a given investment after the funding runs out**. If a given resource or service will no longer be available or affordable at the end of this federal funding period, or if a district will no longer be able to pay for staff positions created using these funds, that might indicate an alternative investment will have greater long-term value.

❋ Districts should **prioritize investments that build internal instructional capacity** and are thus likely to continue adding value in the years to come.

❋ The need for sustainability does not preclude working with external vendors and partners, but it should encourage districts to be clear about how their services **advance the long-term instructional vision and transfer the expertise to district staff by the end of the project.**

WHAT TO AVOID

How will this investment be sustained or continue to build district capacity after the three years of relief funding ends?

❋ Investments that the district will not be able to sustain or afford after relief funds expire.

❋ A lack of transparency with staff and stakeholders concerning the sustainability of investments in staffing, materials, or programs.

❋ Investments in materials or services that do not improve programming in the long run or build the instructional capacity of district staff.

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6. **How will success be measured? What are the metrics that will be employed? How will the district communicate its progress? How will the results be communicated?**

❋ Considering evaluation from the outset and **being transparent about what success will look like and how progress will be measured during implementation, at the end of funding, and beyond** will help districts "plan with the end in mind." Moreover, identifying what intermediate progress and ultimate success will look like in the long term will help districts think about whether they are aiming for the right goal, and how a given investment is likely to get them there.

❋ Districts also need to be realistic about their expectations for the return on investment in the short term. Change does not happen overnight, and districts need to develop an evaluation plan that takes into consideration **the time needed for new programs, approaches, or strategies to take root**.

❋ The process of identifying indicators of success will also require districts to **monitor the quality of implementation and build structures** to ensure projects and programs are implemented with fidelity or as the program was envisioned.

✳ Developing a plan for evaluation and progress monitoring should also prompt a larger discussion about accountability, how the district will **hold leaders, staff, and external partners responsible for meeting the short- and long-term objectives of any given investment**, which should ultimately be tied to the achievement and progress of all students.

✳ **The communications plan should align with and support the evaluation and progress monitoring plan**. Over-communicate throughout the planning process and during the implementation phase as well as during progress monitoring and the evaluation phase.

WHAT TO AVOID

How will success be measured? What are the metrics that will be employed? How will the district communicate its progress? How will the results be communicated?

✳ Metrics that are not reliable and valid for assessing the extent to which specific intended outcomes are achieved (e.g., using a single measure, relying solely on standardized test scores, etc.) or that cannot be collected consistently throughout and after the funding period.

✳ Setting unrealistic expectations for short-term evidence of success and abandoning investments in new programs or strategies because they do not yield immediate and dramatic gains.

✳ Investments without clear objectives and meaningful and measurable outcomes.

✳ Making investment decisions without involving the research department from the beginning to monitor the quality of implementation and assess both short-term progress toward stated goals and long-term success in improving student outcomes.

✳ Failing to engage all stakeholders and neglecting internal/external communications.

Investments in Staff Capacity and Human Capital Management

WHY INVEST HERE?

A stable workforce of effective teachers, support staff, and leaders is essential to improving student achievement and ensuring the success of all schools. In the wake of the pandemic and school closures, the quality and preparation of teachers and staff is more important than ever for meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of returning students. It is therefore essential that districts **invest their relief funds not only in "stuff" (such as programs, services, tools, and technology), or in creating costly new staff positions within the organization, but in identifying, nurturing, and retaining effective staff; attending to the social-emotional well-being of this workforce; and providing the professional development necessary to grow the district's instructional capacity.** Moreover, given the diversity of our students and our mission to provide educational and racial equity and excellence, urban school systems should consider investments that build the diversity of school and district staff and develop their understanding and respect for the diverse cultures of students, staff, and stakeholders.

The following section looks at three main areas for building staff capacity—

1. **High-quality professional development programming** for all non-instructional and instructional staff

2. **Efforts aimed at recruiting and retaining talent,** including district-level teacher and leader pipeline programs; initiatives aimed at growing a diverse corps of teachers, school leaders, and central office staff; non-instructional staff; and efforts to retain and recognize highly effective staff

3. **Strategies to ensure effective human resource management,** including balancing additional full-time employees (FTEs) with expected attrition, forecasting all immediate and future human capital costs, and modernizing department operations, including position control

For each area, we explore what we know from our work with districts, highlight a set of recommendations and spending considerations, and identify common pitfalls and what to avoid when investing funds to grow staff capacity.

WHAT WE KNOW

Over the course of scores of technical assistance reviews of large urban school districts across the country, the Council often makes the same observations concerning the strengths and limitations of professional development despite vast differences in district context, culture, and approach. Specifically, the Council has found the most effective professional development programs—

* are differentiated by approach, role, responsibility, and need;

* focus on job-related knowledge and skills for both instructional and non-instructional staff;

* focus on content as well as pedagogical knowledge;

* ensure all instructional and non-instructional staff are equipped to serve all students during Tier I instruction;

* address the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of special populations in an integrated manner, within the context of grade-level instructional content and standards;

* provide effective job-embedded coaching and feedback support for instructional and non-instructional staff; and

* are aligned with the district's priorities, mission, and vision.

In addition, we have observed that districts often struggle to strike the right balance when it comes to outsourcing. Ideally, districts should **focus on developing their internal capacity** rather than relying solely on external partners and vendors that are costly and may not attend to the needs, culture, and climate of the school district. However, external providers can also be an important partner in the work—particularly when these partners are held accountable for results and serve to build the district's internal capacity. (See *Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation's Great City Schools*.[10])

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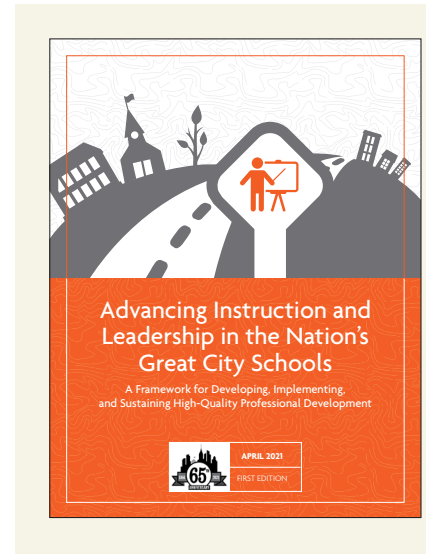
10   Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, April). Advancing instruction and leadership in the nation's great city schools: A framework for developing, implementing, and sustaining high-quality professional development. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication%20docs/CGCS_PDFrameworkFINAL.pdf. (Rivet Education has additional resources at https://riveteducation.org/.)

1. **Strengthen internal capacity.** Ensure the staff who will be designing and providing instructional professional development and coaching support have extensive knowledge of the content and how students learn, pedagogy, and adult learning strategies so they are equipped to implement a multi-tiered professional development program designed to address current and long-term needs of staff and students. This will allow the district to strengthen its internal capacity to provide, sustain, and support quality professional development over time. If additional support is needed, consider networking with fellow urban districts that have greater expertise, or work with the Council of the Great City Schools to form a network to build internal capacity for continuous improvement. If contracting with external companies, build an intentional pathway that develops the internal capacity the district requires to guide ongoing instructional support for school staff.

2. **Identify and address professional development needs.** Based on the district's equity-focused, student-centered needs assessment, prioritize the professional development required for instructional and support staff, as well as district and school-based leaders to address the needs of students. Develop a role-specific professional development plan and allocate resources accordingly.

   ❋ The needs assessment should be approached as a time-bound, collaborative, and inclusive process that leverages the expertise and perspectives of a diverse range of educators and staff, including those who work with English learners and students with disabilities, as well as representatives in the areas of technology, human resources, school leadership, and research and evaluation to develop a plan that is ultimately tied to the achievement and progress of all students.

   ❋ In addition to student achievement data and random samples of student work, examine observation and focus group data, student demographic trend data, and data on instructional staff trends (e.g., teacher attrition, new hires, etc.).

   ❋ Districts should also take into consideration the technology and instructional resources necessary and available to deliver quality instruction in an in-person, virtual, or hybrid learning environment.

3. **Focus, prioritize, and sequence the content of the district's professional development plan.** Engage a cross-functional team in developing a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach to meet immediate needs and build capacity for the future with clear goals, defined outcomes, and measures and metrics for tracking progress, effectiveness of professional development in meeting its intended purpose to make course corrections, justify the investment, or give cause to discontinue the work. This includes monitoring the use of funds and ROI over time.

   ❋ Choose priorities wisely for depth rather than breadth to enhance the quality of Tier I instruction, expand access to high-quality curriculum content, and support the social-emotional well-being of students and staff as they re-engage and build a sense of community.

   ❋ Design and implement the professional development and evaluation components concurrently.

   ❋ Develop measurable/observable outcome indicators for each stage over multiple years.

   ❋ Use project management protocols (i.e., conception and initiation, planning, execution, performance/monitoring, and project closure) as an umbrella at the senior/executive level to monitor and evaluate the rollout of each major funded program and district initiative, including professional development. Ensure that projects are meeting their individual goals and objectives on time and on budget and

that they support rather than conflict with other district initiatives and rollouts of planned purchases of instructional materials and resources.

✷ Align activities and ongoing support with the features of high-quality professional development.[11]

✷ Strategically design professional development for general education teachers to build their capacity to work with English learners and students in special education, utilizing joint professional development experiences that facilitate collaboration among general education teachers, teachers of English learners, and teachers of students with disabilities.

✷ Determine the process for supporting implementation of professional learning, and allocate corresponding resources. (For example, ensure time is routinely set aside for high-quality professional development and support without compromising teacher planning time).

✷ Consider the possibility of adding professional development days throughout the school year.

✷ Create feedback systems that allow for adjusting and revising the plan or making course corrections to its implementation to improve delivery and outcomes.

✷ Conduct ongoing evaluation of the impact of the professional development on classroom practice and student outcomes over multiple school years.

4. **Address unfinished learning.** Ensure professional development provides teachers with the rationale, skills, and supports for addressing unfinished learning[12] in the context of grade-level, Tier I instruction. This includes changing the current paradigm from the type of remediation that removes students from grade-level instruction and exacerbates the learning gap with their grade-level peers.

✷ Build teacher understanding of the entire learning progression for a unit of instruction or a series of inter-connected lessons. This enables teachers to know where students with multifaceted needs are on the learning progression and how to address them. Schedule professional development experiences so they are immediately useful for lesson planning and delivery with just-in-time scaffolds to advance deep conceptual grade-level understanding.

✷ Equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to design engaging learning experiences relevant to students' lives and interests.

> Change the current paradigm from the type of remediation that removes students from grade-level instruction and exacerbates the learning gap.

✷ Address the unique aspects of unfinished learning among English learners and students with disabilities to accelerate their growth and ensure access to grade-level content. This includes ensuring all teachers know how to address language development beyond vocabulary and advance comprehension of grade-level subject matter that allows all students to participate in Tier I instruction.

11   Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, April). *Advancing instruction and leadership in the nation's great city schools: A framework for developing, implementing, and sustaining high-quality professional development.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication%20docs/CGCS_PDFrameworkFINAL.pdf

12   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, June). *Addressing unfinished learning after COVID-19 school closures.* https://www.cgcs.org/CMS/LIB/DC00001581/CENTRICITY/DOMAIN/313/CGCS_UNFINISHED%20LEARNING.PDF
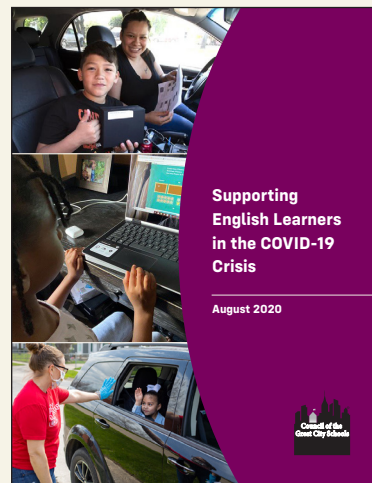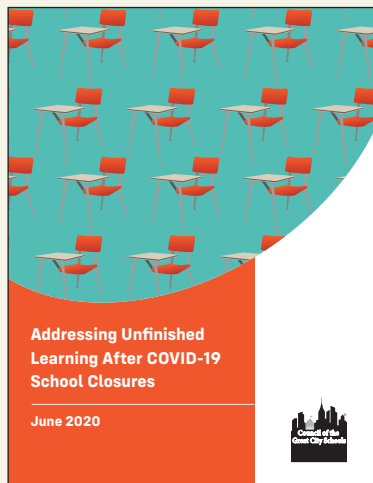
5. **Strengthen teacher and school leader induction.** Induction programs should focus on content and instruction, provide support and guidance for addressing classroom management, and offer proactive time management strategies to minimize burnout. The induction program should also orient teachers, staff, and leaders to the climate and culture of the district and school community.

6. **Provide professional development for non-instructional staff that reinforces the district's instructional vision.** Shared professional learning is a vital step the district should take to instill a shared understanding of the district's values and priorities and to build a high functioning, collaborative organization that supports the success of all students and schools. The cross-functional team should therefore ensure that professional development and the induction program for non-teaching staff articulates how their role contributes to the district's instructional program and the vision of equity, excellence, and respect for diverse cultures and language.

7. **Strengthen employee engagement and communications** to inform, increase knowledge and awareness of, and build and maintain internal support for the district's investments in these areas.

WHAT TO AVOID in *Professional Development Investments*

Based on common pitfalls in the design and implementation of professional development, districts should avoid investing in—

* Induction programs for new teachers and new leaders that lack a strong focus on content and instruction and fail to provide guidance for classroom management, coping strategies to minimize teacher burnout, and support for teachers who are new to the district, grade, or subject.

* Professional development that is heavily focused on decontextualized teaching strategies without providing the deep content learning teachers need to effectively implement college- and career-readiness standards while addressing unfinished learning.

* Professional development that fails to reinforce learning through effective coaching support and feedback, whether this is due to a lack of training for coaches or a lack of clarity and consistency across school sites about their roles and responsibilities.

* Professional development that pulls teachers out of classrooms and uses substitute instructors in their place.

* Contracts with external providers that are not aligned with the district's goals and priorities, are not designed to build internal capacity within a specified time period, and lack monitoring, review, and accountability for meeting pre-determined goals.

* Professional development that is "one-size-fits-all" and does not consider the background experience, tenure, or needs of individual teachers, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, and leaders.

* Superficial, one-time professional development that lacks a coaching or collaboration follow-through to help instructional staff incorporate enhanced practices into their work.

* Professional development that provides teachers and leaders with a menu of options or opportunities to earn course credits but fails to advance a district's overall vision and approach for building high-quality instruction or to address teachers' areas of need.

* Professional development programming for special education or EL/ESOL teachers that is separate from the training general education teachers receive and does not reflect a unifying vision for Tier I instruction.

* Professional development that fails to equip all teachers with the content knowledge and pedagogy they need to effectively meet the specialized needs and unfinished learning of their students without needlessly separating them out from classwork or discussions.

WHAT WE KNOW

A focus on *instructional leadership* is a key component in recruiting and preparing future teachers and leaders. While districts across the country have experimented with various approaches to teacher and leader recruitment strategies and pipeline programs over the years, creating a deep enough bench of future talent has long been a challenge for urban schools and districts. During the Council's Strategic Support Team visits, we have found that recruitment and development efforts are most effective when they focus explicitly on identifying and building strong instructional knowledge and leadership, as well as developing the coaching, mentoring, and constructive feedback skills of future leaders.

There are most likely untapped sources of future talent in your district. We have also found that in their recruitment efforts and pipeline programs, districts often overlook strong potential pools of future teachers, such as paraprofessionals, teacher aides, tutors, community members working in strong after-school programs, and high school graduates; and pools of future school leaders, such as teacher leaders, assistant principals, and other current school staff and administrators.

Teacher and leader diversity needs to be an explicit focus of recruitment and retention efforts. In our interviews and conversations with districts, teacher and leader diversity is frequently cited as a goal or priority. Yet recruitment efforts and pipeline programs often lack an explicit strategy for outreach to underrepresented communities and groups. Moreover, problematic policies such as "last in, first out" often end up undermining a district's efforts to diversify the teacher workforce and disproportionately impact teachers of color.

Environment impacts retention. Not surprisingly, teacher retention rates often increase as districts improve both teaching and learning conditions. This includes access to academic resources, skilled and supportive school leaders, and significant opportunities to collaborate and receive feedback from peers. Moreover, the retention rate for principals is associated with improved working conditions, compensation, accountability, decision-making authority, and high-quality professional development.

The COVID-19 crisis has only served to underscore the importance of building a functional and supportive working environment—particularly when it comes to retaining teachers and staff and ensuring they are ready to meet the needs of returning students. Districts across the country are now ramping up their efforts to address the stress and trauma of the pandemic and school closures not only on students, but on teachers and staff throughout their organizations. This includes providing access to resources and support services, as well as social-emotional wellness programs that attend to the mental health and well-being of staff and signal the value districts place on the well-being of their staff. (See staff and student mental health spotlights on the next page: *Fostering Mental Health and Wellness with Universal Social-Emotional and Behavioral Supports*,[13] *Recognizing and Supporting Student Grief after Loss*,[14] and *Identifying Signs of Suicide and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury*.[15])

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13   Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Fostering mental health and wellness with universal social-emotional and behavioral supports.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%201%20Fostering%20Mental%20Health%20Final.pdf

14   Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Recognizing and supporting student grief after loss.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%202%20Recognizing%20Grief%20Final.pdf

15   Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Identifying signs of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%203%20Identifying%20Signs%20of%20Suicide%20Final.pdf

Council of the Great City Schools Spotlights on Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning

How to Proceed

1. **Invest in leadership pipeline programs that tap into existing pools of talent and focus on instructional leadership skills.** Building a bench of strong future school and district leaders will require districts to be more thoughtful and explicit in the way they identify, support, and prepare staff for leadership roles.[16] Districts can take a number of steps to ensure a steady pool of candidates and to signal the kind of leaders they want—

    ❋ Establish pipeline programs to provide targeted professional development and hands-on experience for future principals, principal supervisors, and other leaders. Identify promising candidates who are currently serving as teacher leaders, assistant principals, school administrators, and principals, and provide the support they need to grow as school and district leaders.

    – Invest in high-quality communications regarding pipeline programs to ensure programs reach the intended audiences.

    ❋ Focus on the *instructional knowledge and skills* these leaders will need to improve teaching and learning at the school and district level.

    ❋ Ensure principals, principal supervisors, and other leaders are equipped to provide the coaching and effective feedback necessary to make a meaningful impact on instructional practice and student achievement.

    ❋ Consider creating new structures for leveraging the impact of highly effective teachers and teacher leaders in a sustainable way that would boost personnel capacity.

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16 For more information, see the Wallace Foundation's *Evidence Based Considerations for COVID-19 Reopening and Recovery Planning: The Role of Principal Leadership in School Recovery and Reopening* and the Council of the Great City Schools' *Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors*.

2. **Create innovative teaching pathways.** This includes strengthening district recruitment and talent development strategies such as "Grow Your Own" programs, teacher residencies, or pipeline programs for individuals outside the field of education.

   ❋ Support programs that provide teacher aides and paraprofessionals with pathways to becoming future teachers.

   ❋ Create other "Grow Your Own" programs to build a steady pool of candidates for hard-to-staff areas, including occupational therapists, bilingual educators, as well as paraprofessionals and high-quality substitute teachers.

3. **Partner with colleges and universities to identify and invest in future educators.** Collaborate with university and college partners to create or improve alternative pathways for teacher certification to attract college students into the district as teachers.

   ❋ Work with colleges to identify juniors/seniors with an interest in working in hard-to-staff areas, such as STEM/STEAM, special education, or bilingual education.

   ❋ Allocate Federal Work-Study Funds for college or ESSER funds to forgive student loans in exchange for a written commitment from students to work as teachers in the district for a period of three to five years.

   ❋ Collaborate with local or regional HBCUs to create pipelines of teachers of color. One Great City School district recruits North Carolina A&T students as tutors to great effect. Another example is The Center for Black Educator Development in Philadelphia that has involved aspiring teachers of color in leading tutoring and summer learning for kids and then supports them with entering teacher preparation programs.

4. **Support certification.** Providing support for provisional new hires to become certified and for teachers to acquire additional certification and language capacity for hard-to-fill positions, such as bilingual education, special education, and college dual enrollment.

   ❋ Expand the language proficiency of existing instructional staff who are heritage speakers and subsidize bilingual/ESL certification.

   ❋ Support existing special education teachers in acquiring bilingual education/ESL certification and bilingual education teachers to acquire special education certification.

   ❋ Support all teachers in acquiring additional certification in areas that support the district's identified areas of need, such as a reading or mathematics specialization, a gifted endorsement, or dual enrollment/advanced placement qualifications.

5. **Create supportive working environments and recognize staff contributions to boost retention.** This can include using measures of workplace satisfaction to develop interventions that address and mitigate issues causing dissatisfaction and burnout. It should also include an explicit focus on supporting the social-emotional and mental health needs of adults so they are able to in turn support students. Moreover, there are a variety of ways districts can recognize outstanding teachers and leaders to leverage their expertise. For example—

   ❋ Outstanding staff could assume the additional roles of providing peer coaching and mentoring novice teachers and staff new to the district. Celebrate and share peer coaching and mentoring success stories regularly.

* Outstanding teachers could be given flexibility for innovation in instructional planning and teacher collaboration.

WHAT TO AVOID in *Recruitment, Retention, and Pipeline Program Investments*

*The recommendations, as well as lessons from the field, indicate that districts should **avoid** investing in—*

* Leadership training programs that do not equip future leaders with the practical expertise, skills, mindsets, and depth of knowledge needed to provide **instructional leadership**, as well as coaching and effective feedback to teachers.

* Recruitment and pipeline programs that do not include explicit outreach and engagement of communities of color to help the district advance diversity among its teachers and leaders.

* Efforts to decrease class sizes that cannot be sustained and do not contribute to addressing unfinished learning.

* District recruitment and talent development strategies that overlook important existing pools of future teachers and leaders, such as assistant principals, paraprofessionals, and student teachers.

* Failing to prioritize talent retention through investments in workplace satisfaction, social-emotional and mental health supports for staff, and efforts to recognize and incentivize high-quality instruction and effective leadership.

Human Capital Management

What We Know

Creating large numbers of new positions with federal funds has ended up backfiring in the past. Reviews of district expenditures of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds show that districts created or maintained 50,000 jobs to reduce class size, prevent layoffs, or provide extended learning opportunities. However, when the ARRA funds ended, districts saw a loss of 44,000 jobs and a subsequent disruption in teaching and learning.

Successful districts not only recruit and retain high-caliber educators, but also strategically deploy staff to schools based on need. In our work with districts, we often observe that the most effective human capital strategies work to ensure all schools, particularly those serving students with significant barriers to success, are staffed with teachers who can provide high-quality Tier I instruction. These districts employ a range of strategies that might now be used to address post-pandemic patterns of need, such as incentivizing effective teachers to work in and remain in schools that service large numbers of students who were most adversely impacted by the pandemic. Innovative districts are also exploring ways to reimagine the roles, responsibilities, and even schedules of their staff to better serve students and staff needs.

Human resource departments have an important role to play in building districtwide staff capacity. Urban school districts are large, multi-faceted organizations with complex staffing needs. Particularly in this current moment, human resources departments are key to helping districts thrive and improve by recruiting, supporting, and deploying talented staff, teachers, and leaders. Yet we often find that districts underinvest in their human resource offices. This undermines their ability to—

* ensure employees have the foundational tools and resources to perform at their highest potential;

* support the development of a positive, people-centered district culture;

* mitigate district risks related to employee actions and interactions;

* collaborate with instructional departments to connect district leaders and teachers to sound coaching, training, and support to improve student outcomes; and

* ensure new-hire skills and talents are optimally aligned with open positions throughout the district.

How to Proceed

1. **Improve human resource systems and processes.**

   * Systematically review operating procedures and workflow processes to eliminate unnecessarily complex, slow, cumbersome, inefficient, and time-consuming procedures.

   * Invest in a user-friendly human resource management system that provides efficient workflow processes.

   * Tightly manage position control to ensure new hires are consistent with district central office and school budget plans. Position control is critical to district budget management. Invest in position control systems, applicant tracking systems, electronic personnel file systems, and other Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems that will help track FTEs and grant personnel expenses.

   * Examine schedules and calendars for opportunities to improve the deployment of teachers and staff and increase student learning time, including innovative ways to reconsider traditional uses of instructional time.

   * Innovate with differing teacher and staff compensation models.

2. **Invest in human capital management.**

   * Ensure the district's standard operating procedures for human resource management reflect best practices across the industry and peer districts. Plan for and invest in lasting improvements to these procedures.

   * Consider developing an equity index that identifies schools in need of additional financial and human resources (e.g., mental health professionals, coaches) to ensure students and schools with the greatest needs are supported appropriately.

   * Consider contracting the services of recruiters and other staff rather than adding FTEs to the district human resource department.

   * Exercise caution when filling requests to expand central office and school-based FTEs. Unchecked hiring sprees may lead to sizeable layoffs or an unfunded increase in the district general fund expenditures when grant funds expire. To accomplish this, consider leveraging natural attrition within the workforce to help manage staffing levels. By anticipating future vacancies in regular budget positions (e.g., classroom teachers), districts may be able to temporarily augment staffing with limited-term grant-funded positions and later transition incumbents into future vacancies.

   * For all ESSER-funded initiatives, consider the full implications and costs of any additional staffing. Clearly articulate the impact of all current and future full-time employee (FTE) costs from grant-funded budget allocations including, but not limited to, unemployment costs and other staffing expenses when grant funds end.

* Advertise any limited-duration, grant-funded positions with a sunset provision or end date. Collaborate with the legal department to require job candidates acknowledge their understanding of the position's end date prior to acceptance. This process should include any adjustments needed to collective bargaining agreements or memorandums of understanding.

* Given the challenges of finding substitute teachers, consider hiring full-time district teaching FTEs to serve in an itinerant substitute teaching pool. Offer training and professional learning to these staff.

WHAT TO AVOID in *Human Capital Management Investments*

*The recommendations, as well as lessons from the field, indicate that districts should **avoid**—*

* Hiring staff with ESSER funds without a clear plan for how positions will be funded after the grant period ends.

* Providing "appreciation" or "thank you" bonuses to staff for having survived a tough year. You do not want to be in a position where parents say, "My child is way behind, but you get a bonus?" Make any bonuses contingent on extra time taught or results produced.

* Enacting collective bargaining agreements with "last in, first out" policies (i.e., laying off the newest teachers first in a districtwide reduction-in-force). These policies may have unintended consequences, such as disproportionately impacting teachers of color or laying off a district's more effective teachers.

* Relying on high-volume hiring strategies that require filling many positions in a short time period without sufficient time for recruitment, onboarding, and placement support.

* Filling positions where candidate credentials do not match job descriptions for hard-to-fill positions. If this is unavoidable, ensure the system builds in additional supports for educators with provisional certification and monitoring to ensure students are successful.

Investments in Instructional Materials and Resources

Why Invest Here?

All students (and teachers) deserve high-quality instructional materials that can be adapted to meet students' learning needs. The quality of instructional materials has increased in recent years and districts that employ a careful selection process can harness these new materials to influence the quality of classroom tasks, content, assignments, and instruction. From our experience through district support team visits, we have seen how high-quality materials drive what happens in the classroom.

> The curriculum is much more than just a textbook— it is the complete picture of a district's instructional vision, standards, support, and accountability.

Instructional material adoptions often come with large initial costs that include the purchasing of texts, manipulatives, consumables, digital resources, and the associated training. Based on the district's needs assessment and projected priority initiatives, consider whether new adoptions are needed in content areas, including literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, physical education, health, English language development, world languages, and career & technical education.

What We Know

Instructional materials should support a district's curriculum, not define it. In our instructional reviews of districts across the country, we have found that one of the most prevalent challenges for district instructional staff is making the distinction between the role of textbooks, print and digital materials, and other resources, and the role of a district curriculum. Specifically, guidance we often share with districts is that the curriculum is much more than just a textbook—it is the complete picture of a district's instructional vision, standards, support, and accountability. It also defines what—and how—students learn, how it supports educators and builds consistency and its expectations for the quality of instruction. We have therefore found that the districts with the strongest instructional programming use textbooks and other digital or print materials to support their curriculum and translate their philosophy about teaching and learning into everyday classroom instruction— they do not see the textbook or any instructional material itself as the curriculum.

Council of the Great City Schools Resources on Curriculum Development and Quality

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE
A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum
JUNE 2017
FIRST EDITION

Curriculum Quality Rubric
A Self-Assessment Tool for Districts
OCTOBER 2019
FIRST EDITION
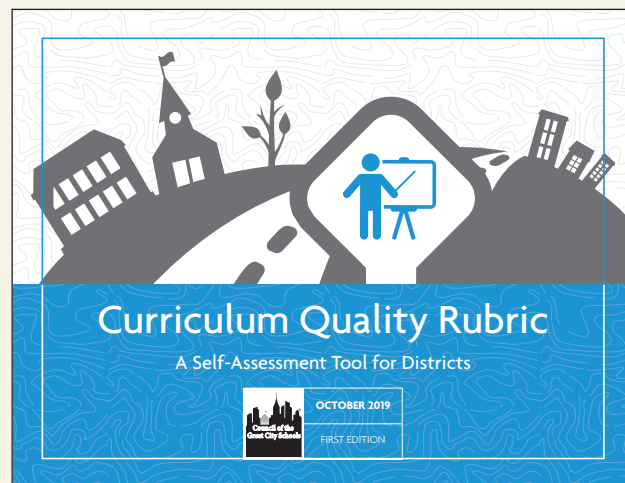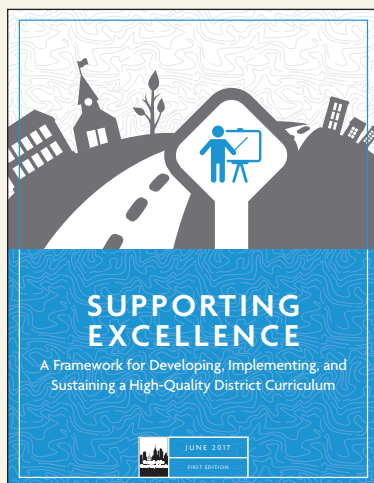
Implementation drives success. Another finding to come out of our strategic support teams work is the critical role of planning and implementation. In fact, we have found that districts using the same materials or textbooks had very different student outcomes based on how the districts handled the rollout of the materials. Successful outcomes were linked to a systematic, multi-year implementation process, as well as written guidance and deep professional learning for teachers and staff in the rationale, content, and use of the adopted materials. High-quality materials may be able to help teachers in identifying and addressing student instructional needs as they arise, but guidance in how materials should be implemented and where they need to be supplemented—as well as ongoing, content-focused professional learning—is a district-level responsibility.

Quality and alignment are critical. Instructional materials are best positioned to advance systemwide achievement when they meet the district's standards for grade-level content[17] and instructional rigor. This is an area where we often see a disconnect between vision and practice. For example, districts may have rigorous college- and career-readiness standards in place, but when we review the actual tasks and assignments in their materials, we find low-level drills requiring little conceptual understanding or application of learning in novel situations.

This is particularly evident when it comes to the instructional materials provided for English learners[18] and students with disabilities. Materials marketed for diverse learners often fail to support quality, grade-level instruction as part of Tier I instruction, and commonly provide generic lists of strategies rather than customized scaffolds to facilitate student access to specific grade-level content while attending to language development or other specialized learning needs.[19]

To meet current student needs, districts will need to address traditional weaknesses in instructional materials. Unfinished learning of essential grade-level concepts and skills is an enduring problem that pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures. Yet district guidance and classroom materials too often neglect this unfinished learning and the just-in-time instruction and support students will need to comprehend new, grade-level content and to demonstrate their depth of understanding.

Moreover, many of the materials that were being used in districts prior to the pandemic did not include assignments and activities that adequately provided access to engaging, grade-level content to students with diverse learning needs. The district guidance for addressing those gaps was insufficient for supporting the acceleration of student learning while providing just-in-time scaffolds for students who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

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17   The Council's *Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool – Quality Review* (GIMET-QR) is a tool districts can use to assess the quality of grade-level alignment to Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. Council of the Great City Schools. (n.d.). GIMET-QR. https://www.cgcs.org/Page/483

18   To address the quality of materials for English learners, the Council produced criteria rubrics for mathematics (2016) and ELA/ELD (2017). The rubrics can be used by districts to evaluate materials for the quality of their English learners supports as part of selection and procurement processes. Council of the Great City Schools. (n.d.). ELD standards and instructional materials. https://www.cgcs.org/Page/664

19   In 2019, the Council completed a multi-year effort to procure quality mathematics materials using GIMET-QR and the instructional materials criteria rubrics as components of the evaluation criteria in the RFP. Districts may consider using a similar process and/or consider purchasing the materials selected for the bench contract. Council of the Great City Schools. (2019, May). *Instructional materials for English language learners: Math for grades 6-8.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/266/CGCS_IMFELL%20Publisher%20Contact%20Info_v11.pdf

How to Proceed

1. **Understand your needs.**

    ❋ **Analyze student data to identify performance trends and map the connections** to the district's curriculum guidance, professional development, and strengths and weakness of adopted materials. It is important for districts to consider that some of the gaps and weaknesses in instructional materials, digital resources, as well as the district's curriculum guidance have even greater implications as students return to classrooms following the COVID-19 pandemic.

    ❋ **Identify the accelerated learning** that vulnerable student groups, such as ELs or other students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, will need as they return to in-person school. (See *Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures*[20] and *Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis*.[21])

    ❋ **Shore up current curriculum guidance around the district's instructional standards and the use of classroom textbooks and digital materials.** This includes improving district guidance on essential content and likely areas of unfinished learning for each course, how students learn best, exemplars illustrating expectations for the quality of student work, and how to gauge student progress. Curriculum guidance should also identify for teachers where gaps exist and how materials need to be supplemented to meet district standards. A more detailed description of the necessary pre-conditions for supporting a high-quality curriculum can be found in *Supporting Excellence*.[22] Examine these systems and, where necessary, address any weaknesses that may be interfering with academic progress.

    ❋ **Determine how well current materials fit new instructional environments.** For example, districts should evaluate whether materials are appropriate or fully optimized for the virtual or blended learning environments that may be an ongoing reality for students moving forward. This will require districts to decide whether to enhance or supplement existing materials or purchase new instructional materials or resources. Districts may also want to augment materials for specific content areas (e.g., science and social sciences) to incorporate historical events of the past year to make student learning more relevant.

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20   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, June). *Addressing unfinished learning after COVID-19 school closures.* https://www.cgcs.org/CMS/LIB/DC00001581/CENTRICITY/DOMAIN/313/CGCS_UNFINISHED%20LEARNING.PDF

21   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, August). *Supporting English learners in the COVID-19 crisis.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication%20docs/CGCS_ELL%20and%20COVID_web_v2.pdf

22   Council of the Great City Schools. (2017, June). *Supporting excellence: A framework for developing, implementing, and sustaining a high-quality district curriculum.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Curriculum%20Framework%20First%20Edition%20Final.pdf

2. **Implement a materials review process.**

    ❋ **Build understanding of the rationale for purchasing new materials** to address unfinished learning so students can access grade-level content. Instructional staff will be more invested in new adoptions if there is a robust and inclusive process for communicating the purpose and the value of the adoption, particularly to support teachers in addressing essential learning that students will need as they return to in-person schooling.

    ❋ **Convene an *Instructional Materials Review Committee*.** This committee will be responsible for reviewing current materials and materials considered for purchase. Committee members should include a broad cross section of central office content experts; representatives from the departments of students with disabilities, English learners, technology, and procurement; and teachers and other school-based staff and leaders. Having a diverse cross section of central office and school-level content experts and coaches, including those who specialize in instruction for English learners and special education, is vital to—

    > Committee members should include a broad cross section of central office content experts; representatives from the departments of students with disabilities, English learners, technology, and procurement; and teachers and other school-based staff and leaders.

    – Determine which criteria are nonnegotiable, whether reviewing existing classroom materials or materials under consideration for purchase.

    – Ensure materials under consideration are not only aligned to district standards but are focused on essential learning and learning outcomes with clearly stated high expectations for all students, including English learners and students in special education, and those who may be behind grade level due to the pandemic.

    – Assess the quality of how classroom materials provide ample representations of varying cultures and contexts so that students encounter diverse perspectives.

    – Determine the interoperability of instructional technology and other technology considerations, such as single sign-on, data security, and student privacy concerns. Incorporate lessons on digital literacy.

    ❋ **Train all reviewers in the criteria tools that will be used for the review.** For English Language Arts and Mathematics, use *EdReports*[23] as a screener and the *CGCS Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool – Quality Review (GIMET-QR)*[24] for grade-level content. (See Appendix B.) Additionally, to review materials for English learners supports, use the Council's frameworks for *ELA/ELD*[25] and *mathematics*.[26] Spend time helping the team develop a shared understanding of the evaluation criteria to assign calibrated judgements of quality for classroom materials. This includes using sample materials to calibrate the rating score for the criteria.

23 *EdReports.* (n.d.). https://www.edreports.org/

24 Council of the Great City Schools. (n.d.). *Grade-level instructional materials evaluation tool.* https://www.cgcs.org/Page/483

25 Council of the Great City Schools. (2017, May). *Re-envisioning English language arts and English language development for English language learners.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/4/darrell/CGCS_ReinvisEngLang_pub_Rev_final.pdf

26 Council of the Great City Schools. (2016, December). *A framework for re-envisioning mathematics instruction for English language learners.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/4/darrell/FrameworkForMath4ELLs_R10_FINAL.pdf

* **Provide resource-specific professional development.** Work with a cross-functional committee to plan, implement, and monitor district professional development related to student-centered, high-quality instruction using existing resources, or new resources.

* **Ensure the materials you are using for classroom teaching and learning meet the following criteria for quality and alignment—otherwise, you should not buy them.**

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

High quality instructional materials—

* **Reflect the district's philosophy of teaching and learning,** including what learning is essential to meet rigorous college-and-career readiness standards, how students learn best, and how to gauge student progress.

* **Emphasize essential standards and address unfinished learning within a strong Tier I program for all students.** High-quality materials provide the supports teachers need to attend to unfinished learning and student misconceptions, build on student assets, and provide students with multiple access points to engage in grade-level learning.

* **Support quality instruction for English learners and students receiving special education as part of Tier I instruction.** High-quality materials are not only aligned to district standards but are focused on essential student learning and learning outcomes with clearly stated high expectations for all students, including English learners, students in special education, and those who may be behind grade level.

* **Support scaffolding that does not compromise high cognitive demand or access to grade-level content and complex text.** The materials facilitate gradual release of scaffolds and supports so students develop persistence in learning grade-level content and become independent learners.

* **Provide student tasks and assignments that reflect high expectations and meet the level of rigor required by college- and career-readiness standards.** Assignments, activities, and tasks provide universal supports while accelerating academic English language development. They also provide multiple opportunities to engage students in academic conversations, as well as opportunities to write across all content areas.

* **Support engaging and exciting instruction that accelerates student learning.** Materials help build student identity, agency, and critical thinking, as well as a love of learning.

* **Support instruction that is linguistically and culturally responsive and inclusive.** Materials integrate culturally responsive pedagogy into the teaching and learning process and provide ample representations of varying cultures and contexts so students encounter diverse perspectives. Similarly, materials value as assets the languages other than English that children may speak at home, recognizing their multilingual development.

Council of the Great City Schools Instructional Materials Selection Tools

ELA/Literacy Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool Quality Review	
Mathematics Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool Quality Review	

Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners

A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners

DECEMBER 2016
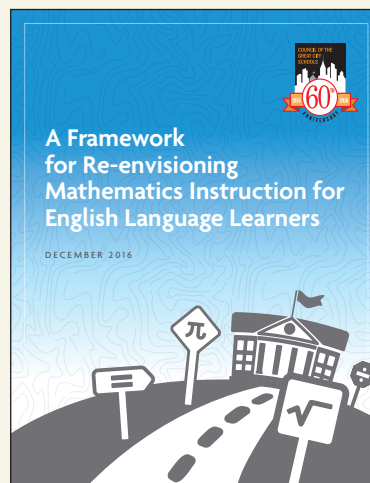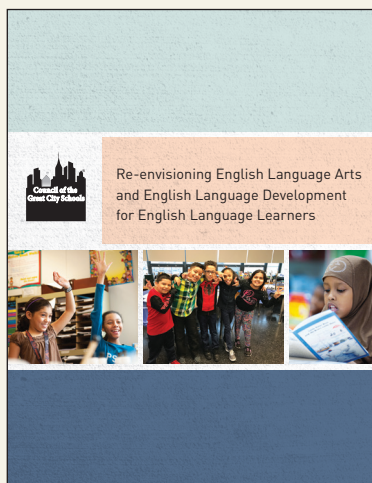
WHAT TO AVOID in *Instructional Materials and Resources Investments*

*The recommendations, as well as lessons from the field, indicate that districts should **avoid**—*

* Investing in instructional materials that do not meet the materials criteria above. For example, investing in materials that do not reflect the district's philosophy of teaching and learning and are not aligned to grade-level standards for content and instructional rigor.

* Investments in textbook series or digital materials that lack support for diverse learners or lower the instructional rigor and expectations for ELs, students with disabilities, students with unfinished learning, and struggling students, relegating them to below grade-level expectations. This includes leveled readers and remedial programs that concentrate on drills and on low-level skills, or materials that cannot be aligned with the district's scope and sequence.

* Relying on promotional information to pre-determine the quality of the materials under consideration for adoption. Similarly, expecting materials used successfully in another district will yield the same results without considering the context and implementation strategy used in the districts experiencing success.

* Maintaining remediation and intervention programs that were not effective pre-COVID-19.

* Investing extensively in remediation, pull-out, and intervention programs that keep students from participating in and accessing grade-level learning or cannot be adapted to address current or upcoming Tier I units of instruction.

* Investments in instructional materials that are difficult to adapt for use in multiple learning environments.

* Purchasing digital materials without verifying that they are compatible with district systems, single sign-on, data collection, support, and other district requirements for privacy, ownership, maintenance, and upgrades.

* Expending funds in a single year for multiple instructional resources resulting in bombarding teachers, staff, and school leaders with so many new resources that they are unable to use them effectively to address the instructional needs of all students.

* Employing a haphazard, incoherent, or one-shot rollout of curriculum materials or new textbooks that fails to provide all teachers with precise suggestions for addressing unfinished learning and acquiring the knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding of Tier I essential learning.

Investments in Student Support Services

WHY INVEST HERE?

We know the pandemic had disparate impacts on students and that some students will need additional support to meet their specific academic, social, and emotional needs. District leaders will rightly consider using some of their federal funds to re-engage and support students with targeted services, with an equity focus on those students most impacted by the pandemic.

> By seizing this moment to launch long-desired, pre-pandemic student support services, districts can create services with demonstrable outcomes to build momentum for continued post-ESSER investment.

One of the pressing challenges for effectively using these funds will be to design and implement supports that meet the immediate needs of current students as well as lay the groundwork for sustained services post-ESSER funding. To that end, we encourage districts to use their ESSER funds to build structures and systems for student support and to gather proof points of success that allow for strong arguments for continued investment after the ESSER funding window. By seizing this moment to launch long-desired, pre-pandemic student support services (e.g., high-dosage tutoring, out-of-school time programming, clinical mental health support, family engagement partnerships), districts can create services with demonstrable outcomes to build momentum for continued post-ESSER investment. Also, think about pairing these strategies with your efforts to develop or use high-quality instructional materials.

Most importantly, however, is that our students have not "lost learning" so much as they have lost time. The main reason for investing in this area is therefore to make up time with high-quality instruction.

WHAT WE KNOW

The research base and the Council's extensive work with districts across the country reveal that the quality, impact, and cost-effectiveness of investments in student support services vary widely. For each of these activities, success depends on **how well they are implemented, whether they are aligned to the district's vision, and how effectively they advance all students' access to grade-level standards, content, and instruction**.

＊ For example, the effectiveness of **extended time** (e.g., extended school day or extended school year) is highly dependent on the quality of content and instruction during the extended time.[27] Year-round calendars have been tried in a number of CGCS districts but were dropped after not producing discernible effects. Year-round schooling can be effective, but only when it is paired with enrichment, acceleration, and just-in-time supports during breaks. Year-round schooling that simply spreads out the calendar over the year without attention to instructional quality tends not to have significant effects.

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27   For more information, see the Wallace Foundation's Evidence Based Considerations for COVID-19 Reopening and Recovery Planning: Afterschool Coordination Systems to Support Afterschool Programming. Wallace Foundation. (2021, March). Evidence-based considerations for COVID-19 reopening and recovery planning: Afterschool coordination systems to support afterschool programming. https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/evidence-based-considerations-for-covid-19-reopening-recovery-planning-afterschool-coordination-syste ms.aspx

* Similarly, **tutoring**[28] at the right frequency, with trained tutors and quality lessons directly connected to the learning students are doing in class, has been shown to raise student achievement, particularly for students farthest behind.

  – "High-dosage" refers to tutoring small groups at frequent intervals (3+ sessions per week or 50+ hours over 36 weeks).

  – In-school tutoring tends to be more effective than after-school or summer session tutoring.

  – With sufficient training, a variety of individuals, from college students to retirees, can be effective tutors. However, teachers and paraprofessionals tend to be more effective than non-educator tutors. Individuals who tutor English learners and special education students must hold high expectations and have the relevant knowledge to support such students in accelerating into grade-level work. Moreover, tutoring is most effective when districts work to maintain consistency in tutor-student pairings over time and provide tutors with guidance on the goals and content for their students. Finally, some research indicates teachers and paraprofessionals have the best results, but other well-structured partnerships can have the benefits of enabling students to develop meaningful relationships with other young people who are studying to be teachers and can serve as another potential pipeline for teachers of color.

  – Tutoring can be effective at all grade levels, but the strongest research-based evidence is in early elementary reading and middle and high school mathematics.

> Year-round schooling that simply spreads out the calendar over the year without attention to instructional quality tends not to have significant effects.

* **Summer school**.[29] Summer school has the potential to accelerate learning and reduce achievement gaps if implemented with small classes (under 20 students), aligned with differentiated student needs and high-quality district curricula, and taught by qualified and skilled teachers at sufficient duration. Summer school has been shown to be most effective if conducted over at least five weeks for 60-90 minutes per day with regular student attendance. The typical summer school program operated in the past by CGCS districts is not likely to be long enough or high quality enough to address the unfinished learning experienced by students as a result of the pandemic.

Moreover, investments in student support services commonly fall short when districts launch unproven, disconnected, or remedial supports that have unclear processes for student selection, low-quality programming, or ambiguous measures for student outcomes. Generally, we have seen attempts to provide student support services fall short when they fail to—

* **Accurately screen and diagnose student needs.** First, districts and schools often struggle to appropriately screen and diagnose student learning needs. High-quality universal screeners to help identify which students may need additional support must be paired with robust diagnostic assessments to help determine what type of support is required. Data from these tools must be paired with the professional judgment of teachers and staff to better ensure accurate identification of students and their needs.

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28 For additional research and resources, see the *National Student Support Accelerator's* website. National Student Support Accelerator. (2021). *Equalizing access to quality and high-impact tutoring.* https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/

29 For more information, see the Wallace Foundation's *Evidence Based Considerations for COVID-19 Reopening and Recovery Planning: Summer Learning with Academic and Non-Academic Activities.* Wallace Foundation. (2021, March). *Evidence-based considerations for COVID-19 reopening and recovery planning: Summer learning with academic and non-academic activities.* https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/evidence-based-considerations-covid-19-reopening-recovery-planning-summer-learning-with-academic-non-academic-activities.aspx

- ❋ **Carefully match student need to high-quality services and support.** Second, districts and schools should ensure that the provided support is well matched to the student need and that the support is high quality. Here districts often fail to use appropriate progress monitoring processes to ensure students are making progress and to make any necessary adjustments. Additionally, districts and schools should invest in quality student support programming, including the necessary training and oversight to ensure successful implementation. Sustained efforts, such as tutoring for at least 50 hours over the course of a school year, have proven successful in supporting student learning and building student confidence.

- ❋ **Align student support services to Tier I instruction.** Finally, student support services work best when they are designed to support students within the context of their daily, core instruction. Too often, students are pulled from classroom instruction and expected to engage in an entirely different course of study, in addition to their Tier I instruction. These incoherent, duplicative, and often confusing instructional experiences too often exacerbate achievement gaps rather than accelerate student learning.

HOW TO PROCEED

1. **Start with the end in mind.** On the front end, plan all student support services with clear goals, outcomes, and measures of success. Track and monitor progress towards goals, make necessary adjustments along the way, and be prepared to evaluate outcomes to decide whether or how to continue funding post-ESSER. Evidence of impact will be particularly important for ESSER funding spent on direct student support services. Given the qualitative nature of student services outcomes, it will be important to establish reasonable and bias-free metrics that take into account the demographics of students and families served.

2. **Commit to equity.** Anchor student support service investments on student need and use an equity model that focuses on all students receiving the culturally responsive and situation-relevant supports they require to access grade-level learning. The pandemic had disparate health, economic, and education impacts on students and ESSER funds are appropriate for addressing these disparate impacts. Consider adopting a framework that establishes universal goals for all students while recognizing that for all students to attain those goals, a district will need to employ targeted instructional and wraparound supports.

> Tightly link student support opportunities, such as tutoring or interventions, to Tier I core instruction.

3. **Implement purposeful tiered supports.** To build coherence, adopt an MTSS model of universal, selective, and intensive supports based on student needs. Ensure universal supports are indeed *universal*. In planning for targeted supports, school staff must carefully 1) identify the appropriate students for additional support, 2) ensure a match between the instructional needs of the selected students and the additional support, and 3) ensure strong alignment between the additional support and Tier I daily instruction. Implement with quality by ensuring effective training, buy-in of senior leaders, operational support for logistics and administration, meaningful engagement of families, and partnerships with community providers.

4. **Ensure a strong link to core instruction.** Link Tier II and Tier III supports to Tier I instruction. Tightly link student support opportunities, such as tutoring or interventions, to Tier I core instruction. Ensure small group support is connected to what students are learning in the classroom at that time or in the near future. Refrain from removing students from Tier I core instruction. All students need and deserve access to core instruction. Some students need the core and more.

5. **Ensure the effective use and quality of extended time and summer school.** As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of extended time initiatives and summer programming is highly dependent on the quality of content and instruction provided. Districts should therefore prioritize high-quality instruction and materials in considering any such initiative. For summer school, districts should also be mindful of the amount of time that will be necessary to have an effect on student outcomes, as well as the importance of ensuring student attendance. Concurrently, districts might rethink the role, responsibility, and daily schedule of teachers and support staff to find efficiencies in planning, especially so staff are not overwhelmed or lose effectiveness given the demands of extended time.

6. **Provide clear parameters, support, and oversight for investments in tutoring.** As discussed earlier, tutoring can be effective if districts ensure the right level of frequency, with trained tutors and quality lessons directly connected to the learning students are doing in class. Instructional routines and materials used during tutoring sessions should therefore be high quality and reinforce Tier I classroom instruction, including English language development and appropriate accommodations for special needs. Ongoing, brief assessments or analyses of student work products can also help guide instruction. Finally, districts should create a system to monitor student progress with their tutors and adjust quickly if changes are needed. If tutors are not district employees, a criminal background check should be built into the vetting process.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

✳ **Scope.** Necessary student support services will likely need to be coordinated across the full scope of student need from academic to social-emotional and mental health. Personalizing instruction as much as possible can also be beneficial. Additionally, districts and schools must meet students' unique learning needs, including those of English learners and students with IEPs, with differentiated approaches aligned to core instruction.

✳ **Student transition years.** Consider how to best support students in transition years, including SY 2021-22 sophomores, first-graders, and students in any additional grade bands who have not yet spent a year in a school building.

   – Intentionally designed summer bridge, orientation, or induction programs can help establish a positive school culture and begin to build student-to-student and student-to-faculty relationships.

   – Similarly, family engagement activities can be intentionally designed to build trust and familiarity with an entirely new schooling experience (e.g., Kindergarten) or a significantly different one, such as transitioning from middle to high school. These activities are particularly important for English learner families and families that are not familiar with the U.S. school system.

> Districts and schools must meet students' unique learning needs, including those of English learners and students with IEPs.

✳ **Out of school time.** Effective out-of-school time programs are academically aligned to the school's overall instructional approach. Schools should consider tasking an administrator or lead teacher with reviewing and aligning programming to schoolwide goals and practices. Carefully monitor student attendance and communicate with families to ensure full participation. Provide students with small group or one-to-one support using high-quality materials and informal assessment to track student progress. Increase student engagement by connecting programming to students' interests.

* **Student reengagement.** In many districts, student attendance data from this past year has shown an increase in youth who are disconnected from school. As such, districts may explore community-based strategies for reconnecting and reengaging with disconnected students. Research shows promise with hiring or providing a stipend to program staff from local communities who have knowledge of the local neighborhood and who engage in personal conversations that build trust and connect youth with schooling and programming options.

* **Family engagement.** Support teachers with engaging families in their students' academic success and how to facilitate at-home learning activities. Provide reminders to do so. During virtual and hybrid learning, parents and families became essential partners responsible for creating learning environments at home, navigating changing instructional modalities and schedules, and helping children connect to remote learning. The rich diversity of languages spoken by English learner families in urban districts and the likelihood of EL families that are unfamiliar with the U.S. school system requires well-designed and supported ongoing communication plans and strategies that involve all the relevant departments in the school district.

WHAT TO AVOID in *Student Support Services Investments*

*These lessons from the field indicate that districts should **avoid**—*

* Investments in support services that are disconnected from core instruction.

* Student support programming or models that remove students—particularly English learners, students with disabilities, or struggling students—from core Tier I instructional time and do not reflect grade-level instructional content and standards.

* Blunt interventions that do not carefully consider individual student needs and match specific needs to tailored programming.

* Investments in extended time initiatives without ensuring the quality of content, materials, and instruction, as well as the relevance and ability of such initiatives to meet the unique needs of English learners, struggling students, or students with disabilities.

* Replacing core instruction with online programs.

* Relying on computer-based software for the bulk of translation needs to engage with English learner families.

* Programs and services that fail to regularly monitor student progress or have a research-based student exit criteria.

* Not communicating about student support services in thoughtful, accessible, and friendly ways for diverse students and families.

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Investing in Information Technology and Digital Resources to Support Instruction

Current State of Remote and Hybrid Learning Modalities

The 2020-21 school year saw many students operating both fully remotely and with hybrid instructional modalities. Data collected from member school districts provided substantial evidence that students were highly dependent on video and synchronous video as a primary instructional delivery tool. Elementary students and teachers were the heaviest users, while secondary students were more likely to be receiving asynchronous instruction.

Synchronous video (e.g., Zoom, Meet, Teams) demands considerable bandwidth for both downloads and uploads. Students often have multiple browser tabs open on a device with each tab refreshing and pulling new information. Data also indicate students use more than one device to connect to instructional materials, including computers, smartphones, and tablets at the same time. Each device consumes substantial home bandwidth.

The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) recommends home-access bandwidth be at 25Mbps for downloads and 12Mbps for uploads per user for instruction and engagement.

Teacher access to the Internet is also an often overlooked but critical component to quality interaction with students. If teacher connections are poor, then every student will have an inadequate and frustrating experience. Like students, teachers need multiple devices and monitors to effectively teach from home. Teachers sometimes need multiple devices to conduct the video session; to see what is being presented; to monitor if students are working on the correct assignment; and to connect to digital textbooks and applications.

Many teachers often replicate in-class instruction with synchronous video. But as teachers build confidence and expertise and gain access to other digital resources, they will be better prepared to engage students through a variety of online methods and tools. With new federal ARP dollars, schools can redesign their delivery of instruction; provide greater flexibility in scheduling, class times, and staff deployment; develop and adopt differing remote and hybrid options; and re-engineer activities that are currently time- or place-bound.

District leadership should recognize and build on the significant increase in digital literacy skills teachers and students have experienced this past year. These skills will dramatically improve students' preparation for the digital world of their future. The district's investments in professional development and alignment of digital tools can enhance teaching and learning as schools return to face-to-face instruction.

Five Questions for Identifying High-Priority, High-Leverage Expenditures to Improve Information Technology and Digital Resources to Support Instruction

1. **How do these proposed technology investments advance the district's strategic plan, instructional priorities, business operations, vision, mission, and goals in ways that are sustainable?**

   ❋ Now is the time to think about whether and how the district can consolidate operating systems; improve "interoperability" or coordination between systems; automate workflows; and reduce manual, paper-driven processes in a way that will improve data collection and quality, reduce the need for unskilled staff, and improve efficiency. These one-time federal funds could be used to modernize or replace aging systems. This modernization should provide long-term savings. (The Council is conducting a project to strengthen "performance maturity" of our technology systems and has developed tools and materials members can use on request.) Initial steps might include—

   – Work with cross-functional teams to identify and articulate current and future needs for instruction, business operations, and enterprise systems. Follow up with a gap analysis, identify priorities, and develop a long-range roadmap of key projects based on district goals, staff availability, resource availability, and critical needs. Create an implementation plan that is divided into six-month chunks, develop indicators for monitoring progress, and assign responsibilities.

   – Initial technology investments provide schools ways to customize and personalize learning options. Districts might consider leveraging technology to transform legacy practices, such as bell schedules, start times, and semester schedules.

   – School systems might also think more comprehensively about providing some professional development online. Online professional development can be more efficient and reusable— and it can be better personalized to the individual needs of teachers.

   – Districts also need to consider the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of its technology and build a long-term budget strategy that recognizes both one-time and ongoing costs of any purchases. These considerations should include appropriate staffing, professional development, technology maintenance and upgrades, and software licenses and hosting costs. Poor long-term planning will decrease the benefits of purchases and erode confidence.

   – TCO should also include benefits and improvements purchases will provide to the district in addition to resources to communicate with stakeholders how these high-priority, high-leverage expenditures will benefit students. Key Performance Indicators should be established to quantify benefits and improvements.

WHAT TO AVOID

How do these proposed technology investments advance the district's strategic plan, instructional priorities, business operations, vision, mission, and goals in ways that are sustainable?

✱ Avoid shelving instructional computing devices just because you are reopening in-classroom activities.

✱ Avoid removing take-home devices and internet connectivity from students for home use just because they are going back to school in person.

✱ Avoid initiating more projects than staff can successfully implement.

✱ Avoid rejecting technology devices, software, and resources based on emotion or a return to the way things used to be.

✱ Avoid reverting to paper-based, non-technology-infused, instructional modalities that were not supporting quality instruction.

2. **How can these potential technology investments improve leadership decision-making at the pace of change in both instructional and business operations?**

✱ Consider whether the technology investments you are thinking about will spur how nimble the district's decision-making could be; how quickly decisions could be reached; and how "interoperable," coordinated, or systemic they could be. According to Project Unicorn, *"Interoperability is the seamless, secure, and controlled exchange of data between applications. Data interoperability is a powerful tool to transform teaching and learning and empower parents and students with their own data."*[30]

✱ Consider how your technology investment might enhance the alignment of your business systems and strengthen the life-cycle management of your equipment, devices, and enterprise systems. This discussion should happen in cross-functional teams. Many business processes, particularly those in Human Resources, are still heavily paper-based, so there is an opportunity to think through how these processes could be automated.

✱ The district might also think about which systems it purchased and implemented some years ago along with periodic upgrades but now have new functionality, process flows, and automation features that were not implemented. These new features may improve efficiency, effectiveness, and data quality.

✱ The district might also deliberate on how disjointed "workaround" systems have cropped up over time in separate departments that might be addressed through a more systemic, corporate technology strategy. Many of these workaround systems were likely devised to solve some immediate department need, but they may have become isolated and disconnected from broader system needs over time. With the shift to remote learning and virtual work environments, seamless and systemic digitized workflows are more important than ever. Consider how these workflows might be better integrated by identifying, standardizing, and better governing data sources; establishing, communicating, and managing effective data-use policies; and prioritizing investments that would reduce paper-based processing and automating workflows to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

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30 Project Unicorn. (2020). *Interoperability.* https://www.projectunicorn.org/

❋ Think about how the district's data analytics and visualization tools could be enhanced. Improvements in the quality of these digital tools have improved markedly as remote work has become more commonplace. Opportunities to leverage this progress moving forward include—

– Providing easy-share access to data through tools like Operational Data Store (ODS) and Data Warehouse.

– Investing in visualization platforms and tools that make data accessible.

– Adopting interoperability frameworks and standards such as those developed by Ed-Fi Alliance to enhance access to timely information and improve data quality.

– Creating "as-is" versus "to-be" frameworks that reduce duplication and increase efficiency and information quality.
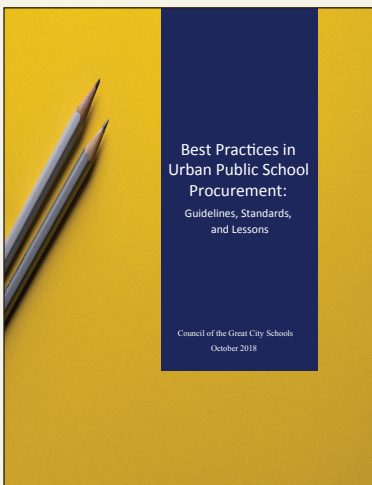
❋ As part of your process of thinking about technology investments, consider whether you need to adopt a comprehensive information technology governance framework that would include cross-functional leadership teams from major departments and divisions. These teams might ensure alignment and prioritization of initiatives moving forward. It might also be important to develop written "charters" or priorities that these leadership teams would address, how decisions are made and implemented, and how they would solve district challenges. Common cross-functional groupings might include—

– **Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) and Information Technology (IT).** Due to the ever-evolving alignment between digital-content delivery systems—such as Learning Management Systems, Assessment, and Student Information Systems—creating a leadership team with these two entities is critical and would allow better alignment in the following areas—

a. *Digital standards and protocols* (e.g., content, rostering, single sign-on) to ease content sharing, use, review, and procurement.[31]

b. *Data portals for students, parents, teachers, and administrators.* The better integration of systems, data quality, data governance, Operational Data Stores (ODS), and data warehouses should significantly improve data to guide instruction.

c. *The integration of applications appropriate to pre-K to grade 3.* Current Learning Management Systems were largely designed with older students in mind, so the better coordination of pre-K to grade 3 content, assessments, and navigation for students still learning to read is a major challenge that requires the expertise of both C&I and IT to solve.

d. *The face-to-face, remote, and hybrid instructional modalities* are likely to be in existence for the foreseeable future. These modalities have differing infrastructure, device, support, and network demands, but effective collaboration between instruction and IT should help create environments that would better support teachers' and students' access and engagement needs.

Best Practices in Urban Public School Procurement:
Guidelines, Standards, and Lessons

Council of the Great City Schools
October 2018

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31   Council of the Great City Schools. (2018, October). *Best practices in urban public school procurement: Guidelines, standards, and lessons.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/35/Best%20Practices%20in%20Procurement.pdf

e. ***The coordination and assessment of digital content and its availability*** across grade levels and among schools is important. The district might consider developing and maintaining a digital library of purchased ed-tech products; monitoring their usage and effectiveness; and assuring appropriate licensing, privacy, updating, and security.

f. ***The development and provision of integrated professional development*** for teachers and staff on a digital portfolio.

– **Procurement, IT, and C&I to adopt and enforce technology standards; and create processes for the selection, evaluation, and purchase of ed-tech products and solutions.** This team might work to ensure district-adopted interoperability and privacy standards, licensing and hosting terms, and other district requirements are included in vendor contracts.

WHAT TO AVOID

How can these potential technology investments improve leadership decision-making at the pace of change in both instructional and business operations?

❋ Avoid selection of products and solutions that do not meet the district's adopted technical requirements, such as privacy and interoperability standards that would increase project failure, expose district to risks, or implementation delays.

❋ Avoid siloed planning and decision-making by departments.

❋ Avoid prioritizing investments and initiatives without an agreed-upon procedure and criteria.

3. **How do these potential technology investments enhance safe and secure learning environments and protect against cyberattacks, such as phishing, DDoS, and ransomware?** The Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) recently issued an advisory warning about cyber-attacks on K-12 institutions. A number of Great City School systems have been victims of these attacks. You can strengthen your security posture by considering the following—

❋ Consider creating an IT security office under your CIO and develop and coordinate comprehensive planning to ward off escalating cyber threats.

❋ Think about conducting an annual comprehensive Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment (network and systems) and develop mitigation plans that include indicators of progress.

❋ Review and enhance your Cyber Security Plan to make sure it includes security policies, procedures, and countermeasures.

❋ Consider adopting a Security Framework, such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) or ISO/IEC 27001/27002.

❋ Consider modernizing security systems, such as Next Generation Firewalls, Next Generation Antivirus, and Wi-Fi Policy Enforcement Firewalls.

❋ Upgrade and use mobile device management (MDM) tools to lower costs, maintain security and compliance, manage inventory, and better support students and families.

❋ Ensure all devices at school and at home have content filtering according to privacy and security policies.

❋ Establish multiple, independent internet service paths to minimize the effects of cyberattacks.

❋ Consider requiring user identity and role management functions across all systems, including student authentication to access instructional resources.

❋ Think about adopting and requiring two-factor authentication for all staff who have access to critical systems like email, ERP, SIS, etc.

❋ Develop and practice specific Incident Response Plans to cybersecurity threats.

❋ Consider adopting IoT (Internet of Things) standards to ensure the secure configuration and installation of appliances and equipment at schools, such as freezers, refrigerators, and air conditioning units.

❋ Think about having your business and academic leadership teams develop Continuity Plans for when technology is not available.

❋ Consider reviewing your district insurance programs to ensure you have adequate coverage for cybersecurity events.

WHAT TO AVOID

How do these potential technology investments enhance safe and secure learning environments and protect against cyberattacks, such as phishing, DDoS, and ransomware?

❋ Avoid thinking that your district is safe enough. Cyberattacks are often being supported by foreign governmental agencies and are very sophisticated. Every district is "one click" away from a major cyber-intrusion. No system is invulnerable, and it takes constant awareness of staff and investment in security systems to ensure security and safety.

❋ Avoid putting off Vulnerability Assessments and Penetration Tests until you are better prepared.

❋ Avoid investments in technology and devices when you have not thought about the longer-term costs of repairing and maintaining them.

4. **What are your options with these new investments to ensure equitable home access to technology and the Internet?** The $7.1 Billion Emergency Broadband Connection Act is specifically designed to address this need.

❋ **Consider the differing requirements that student and teacher devices might have.** In addition, take-home devices often need higher technical requirements than in-classroom devices. And secondary students may require higher processing power to participate in courses like coding, Computer-Aided Design (CAD), and video editing. The district's adoption of Alternate Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), eSports, and technology in education programs will also require a higher grade of devices. As an example of device specifications, see *Selecting the right Chromebook for your school, staff and students*.[32]

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32   Google for Education. (2021, May). *Selecting the right Chromebook for your school, staff and students.* https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15MBdfJTqKZaqymPKYV8JMBxneqshFT7OGpolxFbHiL8/edit#slide=id.gb78f293965_1_0

❋ **Internet access tools, such as hotspots, should be purchased with unlimited data and no throttling of speed.** Most hotspots may not be able to meet the speed requirements necessary for synchronous video conferencing and student access to other applications from multiple devices. Consider moving away from hotspots to more permanent Wi-Fi provision.

❋ **Consider supporting organizations that advocate for the FCC to revise home broadband standards and allow districts to use E-Rate and other funds to provide home connectivity from now on.**

❋ **Consider steps the district could take with ARP funding to ensure equitable access to broadband for all students from remote locations.** The district might think about a multipronged response to developing home access, considering such factors as devices, Home ISP, home networks, content filtering, and ed-tech applications. The purchased amount of bandwidth often is not available at all times, so the district may want to think about private LTE (including CBRS mesh networks), intergovernmental partnerships and municipal broadband installations, and private/public partnership mesh networks (e.g., densely populated housing and public housing authorities, community-based organizations, community centers, parks and fields for wireless installments, partnerships with internal cable plants for apartments, extending Wi-Fi to outside areas, satellite provision, drones, and cellular hotspots).[33]

❋ **Consider reviewing contracts with vendors to ensure they include language about interoperability, privacy, security, and availability of data for monitoring, troubleshooting, and support.**
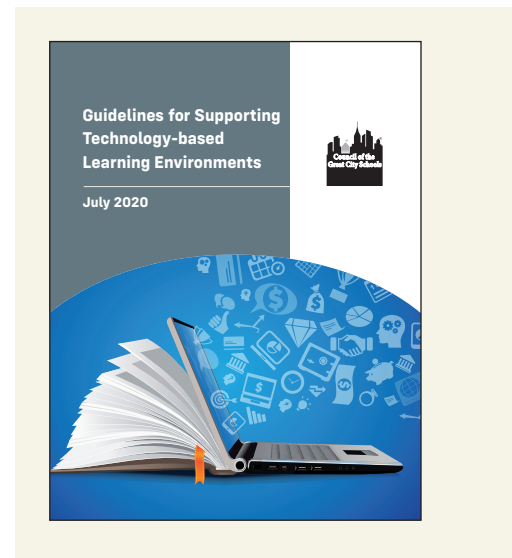
WHAT TO AVOID

What are your options with these new investments to ensure equitable home access to technology and the Internet?

❋ Avoid popular or well-advertised solutions that are not compatible with the district's technical architecture or may not be effective in the region where the district is located.

❋ Avoid selecting student hotspot service providers without evaluating the adequate availability of service in the students' neighborhood.

❋ Avoid assigning one hotspot per household without considering the number of students who will be using the internet service at the same time.

❋ Avoid assigning used and outdated classroom devices to students.

❋ Avoid contracts with service providers that require personal information that could discourage immigrant families from signing up.

❋ Avoid assuming that students, staff, and parents are as familiar with the district's equity issues and needs as you are.

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33   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, July). *Guidelines for supporting technology-based learning environments.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/CGCS_CIO%20Report.pdf

5. **What technology should you be considering to better support student and staff access to devices and systems that would enhance instruction?**

　❋　Consider how the district will handle the support, maintenance, training, servicing, and storage of the exponentially increasing number of devices, systems, applications, and Internet tools. The district should maintain sufficient reserves of technology to minimize any impact on instruction. (Factors might include number of available staff to repair devices, parts on hand, and contracted support.)

　❋　Consider assessing departments and programs to ensure they are right-sized for the future.

　❋　Review current IT job requirements in line with future systems and needed operations and develop appropriate training and professional development.

　❋　Think about developing self-help repositories (i.e., codifying all the knowledge utilized these past 12 months for staff to support themselves).

　❋　Consider increasing support desk staff, helplines, services, and operating hours to assist students and families as part of the district's support IT model.

　❋　Plan for regional support desks to handle non-traditional hours of IT support, including bilingual parent drop-off centers.

　❋　Consider managing and monitoring the support provided to students, faculty, and staff with data from a service management system (i.e., resolution rates, ticket volume, time to resolution, time per agent, user satisfaction rates, etc.). Staff according to needs.

　❋　Think about re-evaluating your district network (i.e., LAN, WAN, wireless, firewalls, and filters) design and architecture to see what upgrades are needed to accommodate increased numbers of devices, capacity, and coverage.

　❋　Consider increased monitoring and management of the network environment, its uptime, "throughput," and security.

　❋　Consider increasing the district's internet service capacity to accommodate increased usage.

　❋　Consider increased access to devices for students with special needs.

　　–　Language-acquisition apps, software, and labs for English learners.

　　–　Assistive technology for students with disabilities.

　　–　Digital literacy lessons and coursework for students and adults.

　　–　Technology-based or adaptive testing or assessments systems.

WHAT TO AVOID

What technology should you be considering to better support student and staff access to devices and systems that would enhance instruction?

　❋　Avoid not meeting the agreed-upon service-level standards, because doing so often leads to frustration and lowered confidence in the district's ability to support teaching and learning.

　❋　Avoid delays in the repair and replacement of student and teacher devices that have a significant impact on teaching and learning.

High-Leverage Investments

The Council suggests three high-leverage investments to improve security, strengthen organizational and systems interoperability and operations, and improve student access to technology and broadband access.

1. **Enhance the district's IT security.**

   ❋ Develop a Cyber Security Plan that would include the district's security policies, procedures, and countermeasures.

   ❋ Adopt Security Frameworks, such as National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) or ISO/IEC 27001/27002.

   ❋ Conduct annual comprehensive Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessments (network and systems) and develop mitigation plans with evidence of progress.

2. **Strengthen system interoperability and enterprise system modernization (ERP, SIS, LMS).**

   ❋ Adopt a Data Strategy and Management Plan.

   ❋ Adopt comprehensive governance frameworks that include developing cross-functional leadership teams across all major departments and divisions.

3. **Build or enhance a multifaceted approach to home and school technology and Internet access for students and teachers.**

   ❋ Provide appropriate computing device(s) for all students who need them.

   ❋ Ensure adequate Internet access for all students.

   ❋ Ensure appropriate levels of customer service training and develop standards and protocols regarding technology-related customer service (internally and externally).

Investing in Facilities and Other Operations

The nation's major urban public-school systems have been financially squeezed for many years, and the result of this disinvestment has been crumbling facilities, decaying infrastructure, and the accelerated deterioration and premature failure of school buildings and their operating systems.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) recently approved by Congress and signed into law by President Biden includes approximately $122 billion for elementary and secondary schools. About 20 percent of the funds must go for efforts to reduce "learning loss," but an unspecified amount can be devoted to—

1. **School facility repairs and improvements** to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs.

2. **Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects** to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and windows and door repair and replacement.

3. **Developing and implementing health protocols and strategies,** including to the extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

In other words, these new funds can be used by school districts to address "learning loss" among students, mitigate virus transmission, improve environmental health, meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) health guidelines and protocols, and other purposes that help us meet our third goal— building lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning.

Five Questions for Identifying High-Priority, High-Leverage Expenditures to Improve Facilities and Other Operations

District chief operating officers and facilities directors will be responsible for implementing many of the investments, but Great City School leaders, cabinet members, and staff might consider the following questions and issues as they work on investments with federal American Rescue Plan funds on facilities and other operations and how they fit into the district's broader priorities and game plan.

1. **What do our facilities assessments tell us about what one-time investments we need to make immediately in our buildings to safely reopen our schools and build public and staff confidence; what investments need to be made now that will have longer-range benefits; and what investments related to ongoing or deferred maintenance might wait for a subsequent federal infrastructure bill or could be addressed by our local bonding efforts?**

   ✳ Assumed in this question is that the district has conducted a systemwide facilities assessment that itemizes the needs of each building in the district. This might have been done as part of a recent modernization effort or as part of your bond initiatives. If, however, you have not done this in the last three-to-five years, you might consider using a portion of your ARP funds for this purpose. The Great City School systems have many examples of these assessments and templates for either outsourcing the work or conducting the assessments in-house.

   ✳ Also embedded in this question is the need to differentiate the facilities needs that the local community or the state will be asked to underwrite through bond programs or state building funds.

   ✳ The results of this assessment should be used as part of the public engagement and communications planning for how to prioritize investments in facilities. The results of this spending will be highly visible to the public, stakeholders, parents, teachers and staff, and the media. Your ability to articulate what you will spend dollars on to safely reopen buildings will be critical to building public confidence and transparency.

   ✳ Some portion of your ARP facilities dollars will be devoted to immediate, one-time expenditures that will have little long-term payoff beyond reopening schools. Some of these will involve test kits, plexiglass (if necessary), signage, PPE, cleaning supplies, and other items. Your goal should be to spend what you need to spend in ARP dollars to open schools as quickly and safely as possible but not to overspend on these items. And make sure you stay current of CDC and other guidance because our understanding of COVID-19 continues to evolve. Use your assessment results to stage or schedule for facilities work.

* There are also immediate investments you could make that would address immediate COVID-related issues and have longer-term payoffs. Examples might include upgrading HVAC systems, replacing windows, updating water and sanitation systems, and the like. These are expensive upgrades you do not get to do often, but you could tie them directly to the pandemic and boost public confidence at the same time.

* In addition, there is considerable deferred maintenance in our urban public schools that may be related to the pandemic or may not be. Be careful about using these new ARP funds for addressing non-pandemic-related needs that might be better addressed through your local bonding effort or a federal infrastructure measure.

WHAT TO AVOID

What do our facilities assessments tell us about what one-time investments we need to make immediately in our buildings to safely reopen our schools and build public and staff confidence; what investments need to be made now that will have longer-range benefits; and what investments related to ongoing or deferred maintenance might wait for a subsequent federal infrastructure bill or could be addressed by our local bonding efforts?

* Stay away from investments that will not pass the "headlines" test. For example, the legislation is flexible enough that you could resurface your parking lots, but the public will have a hard time connecting that investment back to the pandemic and their safety.

* Try to avoid overspending on immediate, short-term goods that are likely never to be used or sent to a warehouse for indefinite storage. Spend what you need to reopen schools but no more.

* Avoid facilities investments that add to the school system's resource inequities.

2. **Are there professional development or staffing needs that need to be considered with any new equipment, system, procedures, or facilities you are considering as part of your facilities investments?**

* With the purchase of new equipment, furniture, systems, and the like, there will be a learning curve with staff on how to install, use, maintain, clean, and repair it. The district should be thinking about what training needs to be done with managerial and trades staff on any new equipment.

* In addition, the district will need to be thinking about the life cycle of any new facilities it invests in and what the long-term implications are for repairing and maintaining that equipment and facilities beyond the life of the federal monies.

* You may also need to think about whether there are short-term staffing needs to address. Does the new equipment you have purchased require additional staff in one area or another? Are there custodial needs that emerge from any facilities or equipment modifications that you are thinking about?

* And you may need to think through whether the routine workflow of staff is likely to change and whether those changes require modifications to job descriptions, staffing credentials, or contracts.

Are there professional development or staffing needs that need to be considered with any new equipment, system, procedures, or facilities you are considering as part of your facilities investments?

❋ Avoid infrastructure investments with ARP funds that you cannot easily tie back to issues created by the pandemic or need to be addressed to handle any future health-related issue.

❋ Avoid creating "wish lists" of things that would be nice to purchase or fix but that are not connected back to a facilities assessment and plan and to the general pandemic-related purposes of these funds.

3. **What changes to our facilities or other operations**[34] **do we need to think about if remote instruction becomes the permanent choice for some of our students and families? Are there modifications to our facilities we could make that would address the mental health and social/emotional needs of our staff and students?** (See *Fostering Mental Health and Wellness with Universal Social-Emotional and Behavioral Supports*,[35] *Recognizing and Supporting Student Grief after Loss*,[36] and *Identifying Signs of Suicide and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury*.[37])

    ❋ It is likely some portion of our families and parents will want their children to remain at home and receive instruction remotely next fall and beyond. In fact, some students seem to do better academically and socially in remote settings and may want to continue in that vein. The district may want to think through whether this possibility has implications for how buildings are configured. Also consider the possibility of moving between in-person and online instruction in the future.

    ❋ If sizable numbers of students decide to stay at home for all or a portion of their instruction, the district will need to rethink its bus routes and numbers of drivers, its cafeteria layouts and possible lost revenues, and even discipline policies. Make sure these considerations are on the table for discussion. Are there ways to use ARP funding to get ahead of these possible trends?

    ❋ Most everyone is cognizant that the prolonged pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health and social/emotional welfare of students, teachers, and staff. There might be ways to address some of these issues through such facility modifications as softer lighting, planting, and background music.

    ❋ The significant expansion of instructional devices used by students may also require additional charging stations or electrical outlets in buildings.

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34 Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, June). *Operational issues in the reopening of schools during the COVID-19 crisis: Facilities, transportation, and security.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Operations%20Report%20Final.pdf

35 Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Fostering mental health and wellness with universal social-emotional and behavioral supports.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%201%20Fostering%20Mental%20Health%20Final.pdf

36 Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Recognizing and supporting student grief after loss.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%202%20Recognizing%20Grief%20Final.pdf

37 Council of the Great City Schools. (2021, May 21). *Identifying signs of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Spotlight%203%20Identifying%20Signs%20of%20Suicide%20Final.pdf

WHAT TO AVOID

What changes to our facilities or other operations do we need to think about if remote instruction becomes the permanent choice for some of our students and families? Are there modifications to our facilities we could make that would address the mental health and social/emotional needs of our staff and students?

✳ Do not go too far afield in what you invest in this area. Keep in mind the perspectives of your local community.

✳ Be careful about staffing changes that look positive in the short term but have long-term cost implications.

✳ Avoid facility expenditures that have disproportionate or unusual maintenance requirements in the long term.

✳ Avoid lack of transparency in how and why funds are spent on facilities and related capital needs.

4. **Do we need new or better systems to inventory or track facility or equipment expenditures?**

    ✳ Many big-city school systems have ERP systems with facilities functionality, but not everyone uses them fully or updates them regularly. Is there additional functionality that your ERP requires and is there additional training on that enhanced ERP staff will need?

    ✳ Some of your purchases with ARP dollars may have storage and warehousing implications. Be sure to include these in your planning.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do we need new or better systems to inventory or track facility or equipment expenditures?

✳ Avoid a situation where you are not tracking what you have purchased. Eventually you will be asked to account for the goods, services, and products.

✳ Avoid doing "workarounds" in your ERP system to track and monitor your facilities spending.

5. **What metrics and key performance indicators will you use to indicate your facilities investments are meeting short-range output targets and longer-range goals?**

Options for Major Investments

Since there is imprecise language in the ARP on what you can use these funds for in the area of facilities, it is important that districts—

1. Distinguish prioritized operational and maintenance needs and avoid using the PK-12 funds for major capital projects or for work on buildings and equipment that might not be high priorities.[38]

2. Focus on repairing or replacing existing equipment, mechanical systems, water systems, and life and safety support systems and critical components of those systems in school facilities that were in poor condition and were not as healthy or safe before COVID-19 and had the greatest inequities, and disproportionate and disparate impacts on students and staff, during the pandemic. Types of equipment, systems and critical components could include—

   – supplies to sanitize and clean the district's facilities;

   – maintaining and improving indoor air quality;

   – mechanical, electrical/low voltage to support building Emergency Management Systems;

   – repairing and improving school facilities to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards;

   – plumbing related to clean water supply and waste;

   – training and professional development on sanitizing and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases; and

   – configuring indoor/outdoor learning and isolation spaces.

Recommendations for Maintaining Ventilation and Improving Air Quality

Maintaining ventilation[39] to improve indoor air quality is a major component in reducing risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, other staff, and parents. Districts should follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and use American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to repair or replace existing mechanical and non-mechanical systems and critical components of those systems that are not fully functional. These systems and equipment might include—

1. Supply and exhaust fans that do not require operable windows.

2. Windows and exhaust fans *and* operable windows that have an "openable" area less than four percent of the room's total square footage.

3. Combinations of supply and exhaust fans, and windows.

4. HVAC systems consisting of rooftop units, air handling units, central plant and dedicated outside systems, and univents.

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38   The relief funds could, however, be used for planning and assessments in the event Congress enacts funding for a major infrastructure legislation, including PK-12 funds for the modernization of school facilities.

39   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, September). *Spotlight on increasing ventilation and improving air quality in schools.* https://www.cgcs. org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Coronavirus--Spotlight--Air%20Quality%20and%20Ventilation.pdf

To ensure the ventilation systems are well-maintained and fully functional, schools and districts might follow their current inspection and testing protocols, and address any deficiencies to ensure systems are ready for the reopening and continued occupancy of district facilities. Depending on the systems and sector of the country, some steps to consider include—

1. Changing return air filters in HVAC systems to a minimum MERV 13 filter (or equivalent) with the greatest depth allowed by the equipment, typically 2" where possible.

2. Inspecting all HVAC equipment and areas and rooms supported by these systems to ensure proper operation, paying particular attention to interior or sealed rooms, and repairing and replacing all inoperable HVAC equipment (blowers, exhausts, RTUs, AHUs, univents, fan coil units, heat pumps, etc.).

3. Replacing fresh air dampers that are not operational with burnt-out motors, damaged actuators, etc., and cleaning and lubricating remaining dampers so they operate at the maximum percent permissible.

4. Repairing or replacing all roof exhausts to assist with air movement and air changes within the buildings.

5. Repairing or replacing all toilet exhausts.

6. Repairing or replacing all existing control systems so settings and schedules can be set to increase the times that the ventilation systems and fans are running for a minimum of two hours in occupied mode, with peak outside air rate, before students, teachers and staff arrive each day.

7. Retroactively commissioning equipment, ductwork, and controls that meet standards and have a proper unit baseline for operations that provide the intended ventilation rate based on planned capacity.

8. Installing doors and windows that can be opened two hours with a minimum of two windows that are operational with stops in place to prevent lower sash frames from opening more than 6".

9. Repairing or replacing all supply, return, and exhaust fans so they are operating properly.

10. Inspecting repairing and cleaning air supply systems that have been laid up for extended periods of time.

11. Ordering quantities of filters and belts with appropriate size specifications so they are available to schools when needed.

12. Acquire automated or hand-held devices to measure CO_2 levels in buildings and classrooms to determine if sufficient ventilation is being provided when they are occupied.

13. Conduct regularly scheduled HVAC preventive maintenance inspections to ensure units and systems are operating properly and providing adequate ventilation.

Recommendations for Improving Water Quality

The coronavirus is not the only illness that district staff, teachers, students, and visitors must worry about as schools reopen for in-person learning. School districts should be mindful about the risk of *Legionella* and mold, which can be directly tied to the prolonged shutdown and the under-use of water systems[40]— including potable and non-potable water systems; cooling towers; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems—and the degradation of water quality in school buildings.

To ensure the Legionella growth and other water-born issues are under control, districts should develop a water management plan with ARP funds that identifies key areas for water testing and consider infection control solutions that include—

1. Routine testing of potable water, either by the water purveyor or the municipality, to verify water quality and purity at the point-of-service,

2. Ensuring the potable water systems are frequently and thoroughly flushed at all access points; and, importantly, that fixtures, e.g., shower facilities and eye-wash stations in labs, which are used infrequently are regularly flushed after periods of inactivity during extended breaks of a week or more in duration.

3. As part of a *Long-Term Asset Management Plan*, developing a program of regular onsite water testing and replacing piping that has deteriorated due to numerous factors, including the pressure and velocity of the water within the pipes, the quality, pH, and mineral content of the water that ensures the water at the use points is of the highest quality.

4. Retrofitting existing water distribution systems in the district's larger facilities so chilling and heating can be monitored and required temperatures can be always maintained within the systems.

5. Acquiring effective chemical treatment, such as chlorine to treat water systems with marginal issues and hydrochlorination for systems with significant problems; and copper-silver ionization or chlorine dioxide to control Legionella in potable water distribution systems.

6. Acquiring and installing ultraviolet disinfection systems as part of any of the district's water cooling systems.

Recommendations for Ensuring Critical Life-Safety Systems

Health and safety measures should be in place to protect the health and safety of students, teachers who work in the school facilities, as well as parents and others who visit. Districts should follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for consistent use of prevention strategies to maintain healthy facilities *and* comply with city/county fire prevention and building codes—and seek guidance from the consensus standards set in the *Life Safety Code* that address "construction, protection, and occupancy features necessary to minimize danger to life."

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40 Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, October 14). *Spotlight on water safety in reopened school buildings.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/CGCS_Spotlight%20Briefs_Water%20Quality_v4.pdf

Many of the steps districts could take qualify for American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to repair or replacing existing fire and safety systems that are not fully functional and do not comply with code requirements and safety standards include—

1. Conducting monthly inspections of fire extinguishers and submitting work requests for replacements as needed.

2. Testing interior fire alarms and repairing or replacing those that malfunction.

3. Testing and inspecting fire sprinkler systems, fire dampers, and similar devices.

4. Regularly inspecting, testing, and conducting preventive maintenance of emergency generators.

5. Inspecting, repairing, and replacing deficient gas leak detection systems.

6. Repairing or replacing emergency lighting and illuminated directional signage.

7. Testing, repairing, and replacing public address systems when there are total system failures.

Council of the Great City Schools Resources on Facilities and Operations

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Lessons Learned from Previous Large Federal Investments

The following summary presents some of the experiences and lessons learned across large urban school districts from instances in the past when the federal government provided unusually large amounts of aid to public school systems. Specifically, the experiences of the Great City Schools during No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the American Rescue and Recovery Act (ARRA), and the School Improvement Grants (SIG) tell us—

1. **Outsourcing tutoring on a large scale produced few results but sizable waste.** The *No Child Behind Act* was passed by Congress on a bipartisan basis in late 2001 and signed into law by President Bush in early 2002. The nation's Great City Schools were largely supportive of the Act because of its emphasis on results and accountability. Two features of the new program caught the attention of big-city schools because of their emphasis on instruction—Reading First and the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) program. The premise of the SES section of the law was to provide extended time and tutoring for struggling schools. The legislation capped the amount of spending for this program at five percent of a district's Title I allocation.

   When the completed legislation hit the U.S. Department of Education, however, things began to change. The five percent cap was interpreted to mean a minimum of five percent, school districts identified for "district improvement" were deemed ineligible to provide tutoring for their own students, and private tutoring providers became the preferred purveyor of these services. States determined eligibility to provide tutoring, but little criteria or scrutiny was used in making the determinations. The private tutoring companies, which were mushrooming in number, insisted school districts provide space inside school buildings for their tutoring and/or transportation to their off-site locations free of charge. Incentives (e.g., laptops, gift cards, and the like) were often provided by the companies to parents or students to sign up for the private tutoring sessions. In addition, those districts that were eligible to provide services had to do so with "highly qualified" teachers while private SES could use lower-cost college students or unlicensed individuals. Finally, it was clear that the tutoring programs made little effort to align their instruction to the curriculum of school districts.

Ultimately, data collected and analyzed by the Council of the Great City Schools determined the tutoring companies were serving fewer students than school districts because there was no per capita cap on what the companies could charge the districts. In fact, an exposé by the *Tampa Bay Times* found extensive waste and fraud in contracted tutoring services.[41] Moreover, program evaluations showed that, in comparison, district tutoring programs were longer, more cost-effective, and often produced better academic outcomes because they were better aligned to the curriculum.

2. **School districts that were not mindful of the funding cliff paid a steep price.** Following the Great Recession of 2008, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and President Obama signed it into law on February 17, 2009. The measure provided some $100 billion to elementary and secondary schools nationally. The Council of the Great City Schools conducted a detailed analysis of how member districts used the dollars, which were meant mostly for job creation, long-term growth, and economic recovery. Some 40 big-city school districts submitted responses to the Council's request for data.[42]

From the outset, there was some confusion about whether the education portion of the monies were meant mostly for job creation or for education reform purposes. Congress meant the program mostly as a job-saving, job creation effort, but the U.S. Department of Education put its emphasis on school reform. The result was that districts did some of both. The 40 responding districts reported using ARRA funds to create some 50,000 jobs—or approximately eight percent of the district workforce at the time—with approximately $7.2 billion. The Council estimated at the time that some 65,000 jobs were created across the entire membership in 2009-10. Funds were received under Title I, IDEA, the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and school construction funds. The ARRA funds allowed districts to reduce class size, create new or save instructional and support positions, preserve jobs of school police officers, art and music teachers, custodians, nurses, social workers, resource teachers, instructional coaches, and counselors. Other districts used funds to purchase instructional materials, provide professional development, and strengthen IT support to schools and students. Funds were also used for teacher incentive or bonus pay, expansion of early childhood services, extended learning opportunities, summer school, school improvement efforts, and the expansion of schools served under Title I. And school construction funds were used for roof repairs, HVAC upgrades, plumbing repairs, and technology enhancements.

In the 2010-11 school year, however, the Council projected a shortfall of some $4.0 billion because of the drop-off in ARRA funds and the loss of some 44,000 jobs. This meant the Great City School districts were forced to lay off substantial numbers of teachers, counselors, coaches, substitutes, and other non-instructional positions. The result was significant beyond the loss of the jobs *per se*. Class sizes were substantially increased in some cities, schools, and grades. Collective bargaining language on seniority placements resulted in the "bumping" of less senior teachers and the placement of more senior teachers into classrooms, grades, and subjects that they may not have taught for some time. The lay-off of less experienced teachers also meant younger, often African American and Hispanic teachers were let go first, undercutting efforts to diversify the teaching force. And student achievement dipped as teachers were moved around at precisely the time they were attempting to put into place new college- and career-readiness standards.

41   Public schools lose millions to crooks and cheaters. (2013, May 15). *Tampa Bay Times*. https://www.tampabay.com/news/education/public-schools-lose-millions-to-crooks-and-cheaters/1274614/

42   Naik, M., Yorkman, M., & Casserly, M. (2010, May). *Investing wisely and quickly: Use of ARRA funds in America's great city schools.* Council of the Great City Schools. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/293/ARRA%20Report.pdf

3. **Having a coherent, instructionally focused, systemwide plan works.** A portion of the ARRA of 2009 involved the School Improvement Grants (SIG) that were meant to address the needs of chronically under-performing schools.[43] SIG funding specifically targeted low-achieving schools across the country, which were often poor and high-minority, and included many schools in Council-member districts. The program was initially authorized as part of NCLB, but the ARRA appropriation added $3 billion of additional funds for the program, bringing the total investment in turning around the nation's poorest-performing schools to just over $3.5 billion for the year.

    In general, the Council's analysis of academic results from Great City Schools receiving the funds was favorable compared to eligible schools that were not funded, although the results did not suggest one model (transformation vs. turnaround) was substantially better than another. The organization's analysis of the factors behind the improvements suggested that districts with better results had clearer, more coherent districtwide strategies for improvement, less state interference and micromanagement, more staff buy-in, higher-quality instructional programming and extended instructional time, strong school leadership, better use of data, and an ability to sustain gains. Results were generally better when districts had a systemwide plan for improvement rather than having each school plan independently.

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43   Council of the Great City Schools, 2015. *School Improvement Grants: Progress Report from America's Great City Schools.* Washington, DC: February 2015.

School Board Monitoring of the Use of ARP Funds

Why This Area Is Important

We have stressed throughout this report that not only do these new federal funds come with some risk, but they also come with enormous opportunities to innovate, rethink what works, and improve the overall quality of what public education does on behalf of our children. Nowhere do these things converge more convincingly than at the school board level. There, the board has the responsibility to reflect the values of their community, encourage bold thinking, ensure equity, and monitor the effectiveness of administrative action. (See *Student Outcomes Focused Governance: A Continuous Improvement Framework*.[44])

WHAT WE KNOW

1. We know that school boards can play a pivotal role in whether school systems meet their academic and other goals with the new ARP funds and with school system resources in general.

2. Research suggests that a school board can better move the needle on student outcomes if it devotes more time monitoring student growth toward the board's goals (progress monitoring) than monitoring program inputs, purchases, and contracts (project management). There is likely to be an uptick in the number of contracts that the district issues over the ARP period, but if this is where the board devotes most of its time, then the important work of overseeing student results is likely to be compromised.

3. Evidence suggests that school boards that evaluate themselves for how well they are fulfilling their oversight and monitoring roles perform more effectively than boards that do not hold themselves responsible for their work.

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44 Council of the Great City Schools & Crabill, A. J. (2021). *Student outcomes focused governance: A continuous improvement framework*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a7LzrCnKrFVhKlBCXAp6d8xH_w_ac-TVPwvhmb3F_cQ/edit

How to Proceed

1. The school board has an important role to play in helping set, in collaboration with the superintendent, an overall vision and purpose for how the district uses its ARP funds—what the outcomes should be at the end of the resources being spent. This does not mean that the board defines what items, programs, or materials are purchased, but it does mean that the board has a role in defining the general direction that it wants the district to take in safely reopening schools, addressing unfinished learning, and establishing sustainable and equitable systems of operation. The board may also want to articulate things it does not want to see ARP funds used for.

2. The school board, whether elected or appointed, also has a critical role in soliciting ideas and suggestions from the community about what the outcomes should be from these new federal dollars. It also should be involved in communicating why the district has decided to use the funds in the ways that it has. The district will have developed a plan for the use of funding that will probably be considered by the board. Once approved, the board is in the important position of explaining what the board decided and why — even if the plan did not get your vote. This is all about the process of transparency and accountability.

3. The most important responsibility of the school board is to monitor how students are doing academically and socio-emotionally. That means that the board should, on a regular and scheduled basis, be taking reports and devoting parts of its meeting to hearing and assessing information and data on agreed-upon indicators of how students are doing on measures of such things as unfinished learning, mental health, attendance, and engagement. Both output and outcome data are important here. And the board should be asking questions about why the administration's strategies are showing headway or not.

4. Central to this monitoring process are questions of equity. The board has a responsibility to set equity as an overarching principle in the spending of federal dollars and to ask about how the administration's plans further that priority. This means keeping an eye on how students are doing by race, socioeconomic status, language, and disability.

5. The school board should set a regular calendar by which it reviews and monitors district progress in spending the ARP dollars and the results it is seeing.

6. In addition to its monitoring role, the board has a role in ensuring compliance with various federal and state requirements on the use of funds. The board should ask for compliance updates and reports from the superintendent on a schedule that everyone agrees to.

7. It is within the board's authority to ask the superintendent how funds will be tracked, how unfinished learning will be assessed, and how progress will be measured. The district's plan should reflect or allocate its resources in a way that is consistent with the board's overall vision and district needs. Be sure that these concepts are included in the plan before it is approved.

8. The board also has a role in articulating what data, measures, or information it would like to see from the administration to help it gauge the district's overall progress in meeting the goals it has set. These measures should privilege indicators of student well-being, attainment, and student engagement. It is within the board's right to ask for the evidence of effectiveness that the administration is using to decide on what areas to spend ARP funds.

9. Finally, it is important that the board ensure that funds are spent in a supplemental fashion and that they are adequately and regularly tracked separately from the general budget, discussed, and reported to the public. The board also has a responsibility to review and discuss how the spending of these new dollars augment and reinforce the district's overarching long-term strategic plan, the goals that are contained in it, and how the district otherwise spends its resources. And it is the board's responsibility to ask how the funds build district and staff capacity, how sustainable the plan is, and how it avoids the "three-year funding cliff."

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. How will this investment incentivize families and students to return to in-person instruction?

2. How will this investment catch students up on the learning and time they've missed?

3. How will this investment address current and long-term student needs?

4. How will this investment help achieve the vision and goals of the district?

5. How will this investment enhance racial, language, and disability equity in our district?

6. What are the district's plans for engaging the public and obtaining parent input on our draft plan?

7. How will this investment align with the strategic plan and instructional priorities?

8. What is the sequence of investments we will make and what is the thinking behind that sequence?

9. How will this investment be sustained or continue to build district capacity after the three years of relief funding end?

10. How will our plan for using ARP funds help retain good teachers and staff?

11. How will these investments enhance student and staff well-being and mental health?

12. How will success be measured? What are the metrics that will be employed?

13. What will it take to implement this program or strategy, or support the effective and equitable use of this resource?

14. What is our plan for maintaining spending transparency throughout the ARP period?

15. How have we ensured that the plan maintains and protects our technology and facilities investments?

16. How will this investment avoid funding cliffs?

17. How will we engage diverse audiences in the plan we developed and how will we communicate our plan to employees, parents, and the public?

School Board Monitoring of the Use of ARP Funds

�֍ Avoid the lobbying efforts to use these funds in ways that address the financial needs of adults impacted by the pandemic; the intention of the funds is to address the educational needs of *students* impacted by the pandemic.

✖ Avoid telling the administration what things it should buy or what specific programs it should implement with new federal ARP funds. The board's role is to monitor whether the superintendent's plan is bearing fruit on behalf of students, i.e., whether the administration is meeting the goals set for use of the funds. The board should not expect to hold the administration accountable for results if it tells the administration how it is supposed to be spending the dollars.

✖ Avoid having individual members of the board think that their suggestions must be implemented by the administration. The board directs the superintendent based on majority votes of the entire board, not the wishes of individual board members.

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Financial Considerations in the Use of Federal ARP Funds

Urban school districts and their chief finance officers (CFOs) have a critical role to play in helping evaluate and prioritize proposed investments; track and report expenditures in a compliant, transparent manner; and pace investments with the grant period end date in mind to avoid creating an unmanageable financial cliff.

Six Questions for Managing and Evaluating the Use of Federal ARP Funds

The following questions are intended to help guide districts and their finance officers, along with related considerations and recommendations—

1. **Does your district have the financial management capacity in terms of both systems and staff to meet the demands associated with these new federal funds?**

    ❋ The Council recommends that districts and their finance officers perform a self-assessment to determine if existing systems, procedures, and staff are sufficient to meet the challenges associated with this large influx of federal funds and associated reporting requirements. The self-assessment should include identifying any deficiencies or limitations that may require additional resources to fulfill all responsibilities.

    ❋ The district should ensure that its ERP, Student Information Systems, and Student Achievement or Accountability Systems work together to evaluate the effectiveness and return on investment (ROI) of instructional investments.

    ❋ The district might consider setting up a Project Management Office (PMO) that sets, maintains, and ensures standards for project management across the district to help coordinate and oversee initiatives. School districts may need to add or expand PMO resources depending on their current capacity.

    ❋ Leadership should tightly manage position control and place its supervision under the CFO. Districts will have trouble with budget management without it. Ensure Finance and Human Resource divisions communicate clearly on budgeted positions and recruitment needs.

    ❋ Limited duration grant-funded positions should be clearly advertised with a defined process to sunset these positions without surprise or disruption. Districts should have job candidates acknowledge their understanding of the position's end date prior to acceptance.

* Districts might review their formalized training programs for new employees to confirm that ongoing staff development opportunities and cross-training for existing employees ensure that business processes will not grind to a halt when key individuals are absent.

* This is a good opportunity for the district to review its succession plans for replacing key personnel or recruiting people to fill positions with the right talent and skill sets.

* This is also a good time for the district to review its business processes and procedures and ensure that they are documented in easy-to-use handbooks or online guides, which should be regularly reviewed or revised to reflect changes in policies and operating systems.

* Data flow and work processes might also be reviewed to ensure that they are well-defined and portrayed to enable staff to understand their purposes.

* There should be a unified management effort to ensure the district has a cohesive and integrated technology strategy. (See IT section of the Council's guidance.)

* Business processes should be re-engineered to take advantage of the functionality of your ERP systems. Continue to actively advocate for internal process changes to maximize the power of any ERP system upgrades or implementation.

* The district might also make sure that it has adequate training materials and sessions offered so staff can maximize ERP systems and other new technologies and ensure that outdated practices are not perpetuated.

* Be sure to keep an eye on requirements from the federal Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) related to procurement, contracting, inventory/supply management, cash management, internal controls, auditing requirements, and the like.

WHAT TO AVOID

Does your district have the financial management capacity in terms of both systems and staff to meet the demands associated with these new federal funds?

* Avoid risky and inefficient "workaround" methods that are meant to compensate for slow and cumbersome processes. Instead, root causes for these methods should be identified, and process improvements should be instituted.

2. **Are you prepared to analyze potential investments and help determine those that have the greatest potential to meet student needs?**

* Finance officers are highly encouraged to review the Council's *goals and principles* and *overarching questions* on using American Rescue Plan funds strategically and effectively. These documents provide a series of guiding questions to evaluate potential instructional expenditures and recommend a process for setting instructional investment priorities. This process should begin with a comprehensive assessment of student needs based on a clear vision of how the district defines student success, along with current strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning across the district. The review should conclude by describing how potential investments would address these needs and build sustainable systemwide instructional capacity.

* Have the district identify investment opportunities through an equity lens that benefits students most in need of intensive support or intervention. The pandemic has had a disparate effect on students and has widened pre-existing achievement gaps and inequities. Prioritize investments aligned to addressing unfinished learning in an equitable manner that differentiates allocations based on student need.

* Price out potential sample investments or cost modules early in the planning process to help provide some context around how far these federal dollars may go in your district. This historic infusion of dollars requires district leaders to think big. Estimating the financial impact associated with programs likely to be considered (i.e., extended learning time, tutorial services, small group instruction, etc.) in a scalable format will help your team quickly get a feel for the potential scope of the work. For example, an estimated cost to extend the school day by 30 minutes, or add one day to the school year, will help facilitate conversations around providing additional instructional time. Developing sample cost modules can help to quickly gauge the level of financial commitment associated with various proposed initiatives.

* Recognize and affirm that these federal funds are supplemental in nature and addressing unfinished learning is the top priority. One-time, immediate investments to ensure the safe reopening and operation of schools (e.g., PPE, enhanced cleaning) will also be necessary. In addition, investments in facility improvements or technology can help mitigate the effect of the pandemic and provide our students a safe environment conducive to learning in the long run. Potential investments in facility improvements or technology should have an indisputable connection to mitigating the pandemic's effects and meeting the instructional needs of our students. As described in the 2014 CGCS report *Reversing the Cycle of Deterioration in the Nation's Public School Buildings*,[45] the condition of school buildings is linked to student achievement.

* Focus on a few high-leverage investments and do not overwhelm schools with many disjointed projects. Target your efforts and investments in a way that will enhance longer-term capacity.

* The goals and objectives of all major initiatives, projects, and programs should be clearly articulated and reflected in their proposed and finalized budgets.

* All major initiatives, projects, and programs should include a detailed business or action plan to guide those efforts.

* Using data and evidence, build on what works and do not be afraid to get rid of what does not work. It is an important time to re-evaluate existing programs and services provided to students and capitalize on the relaunch of a new school experience moving ahead. Insist that investments include an evaluation plan for determining effectiveness.

* The long-term recurring cost implications of all major initiatives, projects, and program goals should also be recognized as part of the budgeting processes.

* Resources should be equitably and strategically distributed based on well-defined allocation policies, formulas, and data to ensure they are appropriately disbursed.

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45   Council of the Great City Schools. (2014, October). *Reversing the cycle of deterioration in the nation's public school buildings.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/FacilitiesReport2014.pdf

* Priorities and resource allocations should be based on evaluations of program efficacy, analyses of the cost-benefits or returns on investment from previous-year decisions.

* Long-standing practices should be challenged or re-examined for their value-added contributions during each funding cycle.

* Metrics, benchmarks, or targets should be required and reported so the district can measure and report on progress towards achieving goals or measuring productivity performance.

* Plans should be in place to course correct as programs are implemented.

* There should be vigorous follow-up to determine causes and alternatives when initial efforts to advance major initiatives, programs, and projects have not been successful.

* There should be open communications, so lower management and support staff are given a voice in decisions and can raise concerns to senior management for everyone to feel they are an equal part of the team.

* Familiarize yourself with grant requirements and assurances[46] found in the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund award, including—

SELECTED ARP ESSER ASSURANCES

Assurance #11: The SEA will ensure that each LEA will reserve not less than 20 percent of its total ARP ESSER allocation to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after-school programs, extended school-year programs, or other evidence-based interventions, and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on student subgroups (each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care).

Assurance #12: The SEA will ensure that each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds either: (a) **within 30 days of receipt of the funds, will develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return of in-person instruction and continuity of services** as required in section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP, or (b) developed and made publicly available on the LEA's website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP. The SEA will also ensure that, as required in section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP, before making the plan publicly available, the LEA sought public comment on the plan and took such comments into account in the development of the plan.

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46   U.S. Department of Education. (2021, March 24). *ARP ESSER grant award assurances.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/ARP-ESS-ER-Grant-Award-Assurances_FINAL2.pdf

Assurance #13: The SEA will comply with, and ensure that LEAs comply with, all reporting requirements at such time and in such manner and containing such information as the Secretary may reasonably require, including on matters such as:

* how the State is developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies and plans in line with the CDC guidance related to addressing COVID-19 in schools;

* overall plans and policies related to State support for return to in-person instruction and maximizing in-person instruction time, including how funds will support a return to and maximize in-person instruction time, and advance equity and inclusivity in participation in in-person instruction;

* data on each school's mode of instruction (remote, hybrid, in-person) and conditions;

* SEA and LEA uses of funds to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs, including through summer enrichment programming and other evidence-based interventions, and how they advance equity for underserved students;

* SEA and LEA uses of funds to sustain and support access to early childhood education programs;

* impacts and outcomes (disaggregated by student subgroup) through use of ARP ESSER funding (e.g., quantitative and qualitative results of ARP ESSER funding, including on personnel, student learning, and budgeting at the school and district level);

* student data (disaggregated by student subgroup) related to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected instruction and learning;

* requirements under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA); and

* additional reporting requirements as may be necessary to ensure accountability and transparency of ARP ESSER funds.

Assurance #14: Records pertaining to the ARP ESSER award under 2 C.F.R. § 200.334 (Retention Requirements for Records) and 34 C.F.R. § 76.730 (Records Related to Grant Funds), including financial records related to use of grant funds, **will be retained separately from other grant funds**, including funds that an SEA or LEA receives under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA Act). The SEA will ensure that it and every subrecipient of ARP ESSER funds will cooperate with any examination of records with respect to such funds by making records available for inspection, production, and examination, and authorized individuals available for interview and examination, upon the request of (i) the Department and/or its Inspector General; or (ii) any other federal agency, commission, or department in the lawful exercise of its jurisdiction and authority.

Note: Bolding added for emphasis.

Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2021, March 24). *ARP ESSER grant award assurances.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/ARP-ESSER-Grant-Award-Assurances_FINAL2.pdf

* ARP funds should be tracked separately from other funds (including from ESSER and ESSER II funds).

* Be mindful of ARP Maintenance of Equity (MoEQ) requirements, which prohibit districts (LEAs) from reducing combined state and local per-pupil funding and per-pupil full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing for high poverty schools by more than any districtwide reductions. The U.S. Department of Education will be releasing additional guidance on the new state and local MoEQ requirements in section 2004(b) and (c) of the ARP Act in the near future.

3. **Are you prepared to establish and track metrics that will enable your district to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of these federal funds?**

   ✳ Proper planning, including the identification and monitoring of milestones, cost drivers, target completion dates, and owners responsible for the completion of major initiatives, projects, and programs, should be a requirement for allocating resources.

   ✳ Project management methodologies and techniques, collaborative decision-making processes, and cross-functional teams should be required to develop, agree on, or monitor overall strategies to address multi-dimensional issues associated with major initiatives, programs, and projects and resolve interdepartmental issues.

   ✳ There should be formal and effective use of cross-functional working groups and communications channels to coordinate plans, goals, priorities, major initiatives, programs, and projects.

   ✳ Adherence to policies and procedures should be enforced, and there should be consequences for failing to take action or for taking inappropriate action.

   ✳ The 2020 CGCS report *Academic Key Performance Indicators*[47] is a valuable resource to help identify potential metrics.

4. **How will you pace investments over the grant period to ensure availability and access to resources, while maximizing impact and mitigating the potential funding cliff?**

   ✳ By "funding cliff," we are referring to the potential pitfall of utilizing non-recurring revenue to support on-going, recurring costs with no plan for an offsetting reduction in expenditures to coincide with the revenue end date.

   ✳ To avoid creating a "funding cliff" for your district, limit investments to non-recurring items and establish clear end dates for any new positions funded by these federal grants. Districts need to be explicitly clear that this large infusion of federal funds is temporary and communicate the end date associated with all enhanced services or positions made possible by these funds.

   ✳ Take time to develop **a multi-year spending plan that encompasses the entire ESSER/ARP grant period, as well as a year or two afterward** to demonstrate how the potential funding cliff will be managed and mitigated.

   ✳ Ensure operating funds are balanced separately each year and cost increases are not covered by these funds without clear disclosure. A plan to realign funds should be developed upfront and implemented within the grant period if cost increases do reside in these funds.

   ✳ The Council suggests categorizing investments into major categories, including initiatives to address unfinished learning, student social-emotional and mental health needs, and schools' safe operation throughout the pandemic, including related facility improvements (e.g., improved ventilation).

   ✳ Develop a timeline for planning and implementing investments that anticipates lead time associated with potential spending and sequence investments accordingly. Recruitment of staff, professional development, and acquisition of new technology, for instance, may take time to acquire resources and arrange.

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47   Palacios, M., Vignola, E., Lyons, R., Hart, R., & Casserly, M. (2020, October). *Academic key performance indicators: 2020 report.* Council of the Great City Schools. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Academic%20KPI%20Report%202020%20Final.pdf

* Leverage natural attrition within the workforce to help manage staffing levels. By anticipating future vacancies in regular budget positions (e.g., classroom teachers), you may be able to temporarily augment staffing with limited-term grant-funded positions and later transition incumbents into existing jobs.

* Maintain a level of flexibility that allows for mid-course adjustments within the plan. Resources may need to be redistributed to expand on investments that have the greatest impact, or unforeseen events may require some adaptation.

* Develop a contingency plan that includes alternate investments that can be made in the case original investments are under budget. Unanticipated vacancies or fluctuations in workload can result in lapsed salaries and benefits. Identify potential opportunities to redirect funds as needed to address related needs and avoid leaving funds unspent.

* Evaluate the complete financial impact of COVID-19 on your district and identify expenditures that may be well suited for ESSER/ARP grant funding. Districts have experienced various budget demands due to the pandemic and should alleviate pressure to respective budgets when it makes sense.

> **Work closely with your superintendent and communications team on a communications plan.**

* Identify investments that either address current non-recurring needs or help build a foundation for sustainable student growth.

* Ensure investments launched are either sustainable beyond the grant period expiration or deliberately made with a defined life cycle up front.

* Organizational and department structures, staffing, processes, and procedures should be adjusted to address current or emerging issues that surface during the funding cycle.

* Some districts may decide to send a portion of their allocations directly to schools. If you are one of these districts, the Council would encourage you to consider setting some goals, guardrails, and timelines (consistent with the district's goals and timelines) for the use of the funds and enhancing your monitoring capacity to ensure the integrity and timeliness of the spending.

5. **How will your district communicate the investment of these federal funds to various stakeholders and the community at large?**

* Work closely with your superintendent and communications team on a communications plan that begins with public input on proposed investments, includes a forum and cadence for periodic updates throughout the grant period, and concludes with reported accomplishments and ROI.

* The level of scrutiny that accompanies these funds demands fiscal transparency. Be prepared to account for all expenditures and demonstrate the impact associated with all investments.

* Make your plan available on the district's website and utilize social media to broaden your audience. Prioritize employee (internal) communication as well as external communication with parents and the public.

* Be sure to address Assurance #12 mentioned earlier that requires within 30 days of receipt of the funds that your district develops and makes publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return of in-person instruction and continuity of services.

6. **Does the CFO have a seat at the table in determining the investment of these funds in your district?**

   ✤ It is critical that the district's CFO is recognized as a strategic thought partner and is included from the onset in the planning, implementation, and reporting of all investments.

   ✤ The CFO brings a wealth of knowledge to the table, including the cost of both current and historical district investments. Their involvement is critical to ensuring the potential financial impact of all proposed investments is calculated accurately, adheres to the intended funding source's requirements, and is sustainable.

   ✤ These federal funds will have a significant impact on the district's long-term financial and strategic plans. The CFO plays a critical role in managing resources and linking utilization to strategic initiatives.

   ✤ This work necessitates deployment of a cross-functional team that includes the CFO and other subject matter experts to assess student needs, evaluate effectiveness of current teaching and learning practices, analyze potential investments, establish metrics to measure ROI, and ensure strong project management is in place.

   ✤ The district's CFO can help ensure the financial plan, strategic plan, and project management pieces all fit together and support each other.

WHAT TO AVOID

Does the CFO have a seat at the table in determining the investment of these funds in your district?

   ✤ Avoid developing recommendations in silos by convening a cross-functional internal planning team to develop well vetted, informed recommendations.

Allowable Uses of ESSER Funds

The ARP ESSER Fact Sheet[48] specifies the following allowable uses—

LEA USE OF ARP ESSER FUNDS

❋ Any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), or Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins CTE);

❋ coordinating preparedness and response efforts with State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19;

❋ training and professional development on sanitizing and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases;

❋ purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the LEA's facilities;

❋ repairing and improving school facilities to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards;

❋ improving indoor air quality;

❋ addressing the needs of children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth;

❋ developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of LEAs;

❋ planning for or implementing activities during long-term closures, including providing meals to eligible students and providing technology for online learning;

❋ purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, connectivity, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment) for students that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including students from low-income families and children with disabilities;

❋ providing mental health services and supports, including through the implementation of evidence-based full-service community schools and the hiring of counselors;

❋ planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school programs;

❋ addressing learning loss; and

❋ other activities that are necessary to maintain operation of and continuity of and services, including continuing to employ existing or hiring new LEA and school staff.

See Appendix A for additional uses.

Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2021, March 17). *ARP ESSER fact sheet.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf

48   U.S. Department of Education. (2021, March 17). *ARP ESSER fact sheet.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf

Sample Large School District ESSER Budget

SAMPLE LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT   *DRAFT*
ESSER Budget Planning Overview
Revenue Forecast

District Operated Schools Share	FY2021 Revenue	FY2022 Revenue	FY2023 Revenue	FY2024 Revenue	FY2025 Revenue	Cumulative Revenue	%
ESSER I (CARES Act) - spend by 9/30/22	33,900,000		0	0	0	33,900,000	6.25%
ESSER II (CRRSA Act) - spend by 9/30/23							
Florida Mandates (may not be applicable to your state):							
Locate Unaccounted Students (min. req.)		6,100,000				6,100,000	1.13%
Academic Acceleration/Unfinished Learning (min. req.)		30,600,000				30,600,000	5.64%
Education Technology and Services (min. req.)		7,700,000				7,700,000	1.42%
Detailed Spending Plan	45,000,000	32,250,000	32,250,000			109,500,000	20.20%
Sub-total ESSER II	45,000,000	76,650,000	32,250,000	0	0	153,900,000	28.39%
ESSER III (ARP Act) - spend by 9/30/24							
Federal Mandates:							
Remediate Student Learning Loss (20% min.)		10,633,333	23,633,333	36,633,334		70,900,000	13.08%
Other ESSER/ARP Initiatives		63,900,000	94,500,000	125,100,000		283,500,000	52.29%
Sub-total ESSER III	0	74,533,333	118,133,333	161,733,334	0	354,400,000	65.37%
GRAND TOTAL ESSER FUNDS	78,900,000	151,183,333	150,383,333	161,733,334	0	542,200,000	100.00%

Revenue by Source

ESSER I CARES Act 6%
ESSER II CRRSA Act 29%
ESSER III ARP Act 65%

Revenue by Year
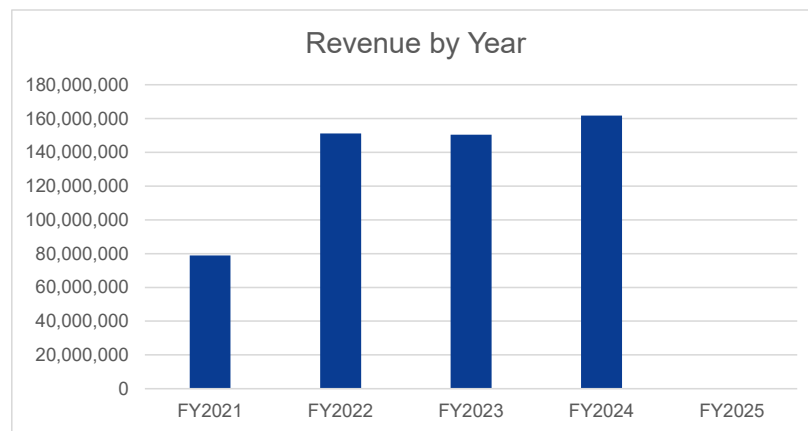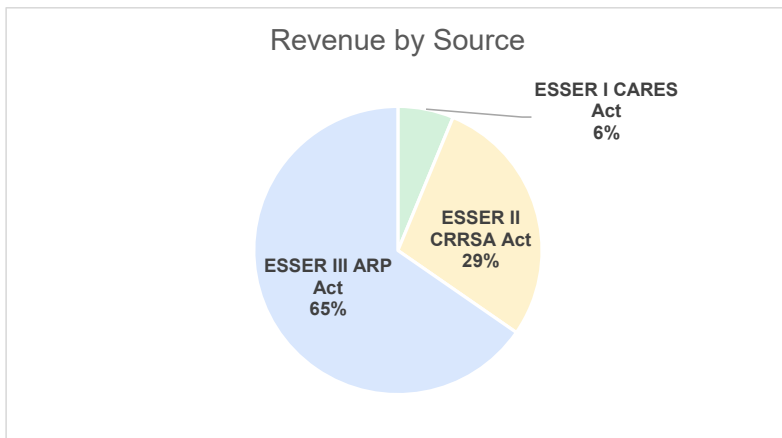
SAMPLE LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
MOCK ESSER Spending Plan

	FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024		FY2025		Cumulative	
	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	Budget	%
Safe Operation of Schools & Covid Costs												
Student & Staff PPE, Enhanced Cleaning		26,000,000		20,000,000		15,000,000		10,000,000			71,000,000	13.09%
FFCRA Employee Leave (10 days)		4,500,000									4,500,000	0.83%
Covid-19 Related Unemployment Costs		1,300,000		1,000,000		500,000		250,000			3,050,000	0.56%
Nursing Services		1,435,294		1,000,000							2,435,294	0.45%
Covid-19 Related Health Claims		10,000,000		5,000,000		2,000,000		1,000,000			18,000,000	3.32%
Other - continuing to employ existing LEA staff		20,817,647						47,299,814			68,117,461	12.56%
Sub-total	0.00	64,052,941	0.00	27,000,000	0.00	17,500,000	0.00	58,549,814	0.00	0	167,102,755	30.81%
Unfinished Learning Initiatives												
After School Tutorial Programs **		2,000,000		2,000,000		2,328,941		2,000,000			8,328,941	1.54%
Intensive Tutoring - Academic Tutors **			250.00	8,125,000	200.00	6,500,000	150.00	4,875,000			19,500,000	3.60%
Extended School Day (30 min. select elem.) **				5,000,000		5,000,000		5,000,000			15,000,000	2.77%
Small Group Instruction Teachers **			250.00	18,405,000	200.00	14,724,000	150.00	11,043,000			44,172,000	8.15%
Expanded Summer School Program **		8,000,000		14,909,400		18,750,000		20,000,000			61,659,400	11.37%
Accelerated Learning Teachers **			100.00	7,362,000	100.00	7,362,000	50.00	3,681,000			18,405,000	3.39%
Graduation Recovery - Sunset Academy Teachers **			50.00	3,681,000	50.00	3,681,000	50.00	3,681,000			11,043,000	2.04%
English Language Arts Instructional Materials				2,000,000		10,000,000					12,000,000	2.21%
ELA Instructional Professional Development		500,000		2,000,000		2,500,000		2,000,000			7,000,000	1.29%
Sub-total	0.00	10,500,000	650.00	63,482,400	550.00	70,845,941	400.00	52,280,000	0.00	0	197,108,341	36.36%
Social Emotional & Mental Health Services												
Student Re-enagagement Initiatives (state set-aside)				6,100,000							6,100,000	1.13%
Therapeutic Contracted Services				3,000,000		3,000,000		3,000,000			9,000,000	1.66%
Additional Supports for Homeless Students				1,000,000		1,000,000		1,000,000			3,000,000	0.55%
Counselors			50.00	3,681,000	25.00	1,840,500	10.00	736,200			6,257,700	1.15%
Sub-total	0.00	0	50.00	13,781,000	25.00	5,840,500	10.00	4,736,200	0.00	0	24,357,700	4.49%
Technology Initiatives Related to Pandemic												
Chromebooks				9,000,000		9,000,000		9,000,000			27,000,000	4.98%
Internet and hot spots (for needy students)		1,500,000		1,500,000		1,500,000		1,500,000			6,000,000	1.11%
Student Device Repairs		1,000,000		1,500,000		1,500,000		1,500,000			5,500,000	1.01%
Temporary Staff - School IT Support				500,000		500,000		500,000			1,500,000	0.28%
Expanded Internet Capacity		300,000		300,000		300,000		300,000			1,200,000	0.22%
Sub-total	0.00	2,800,000	0.00	12,800,000	0.00	12,800,000	0.00	12,800,000	0.00	0	41,200,000	7.60%
Facility Projects Related to Pandemic												
Ventilation Air Quality Enhancements HVAC				28,948,065		38,716,104		29,980,000			97,644,169	18.01%
Water Bottle Filling Stations				1,800,000		1,800,000		1,000,000			4,600,000	0.85%
Sub-total	0.00	0	0.00	30,748,065	0.00	40,516,104	0.00	30,980,000	0.00	0	102,244,169	18.86%

MOCK ESSER Spending Plan

	FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024		FY2025		Cumulative	
	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	FTE *	Budget	Budget	%
Indirect Costs (Rate may vary by district and excludes capital purchases)												
ESSER I		664,706									664,706	0.12%
ESSER II		882,353		1,210,600		921,059					3,014,012	0.56%
ESSER III - ARP				2,161,268		1,959,729		2,387,320			6,508,317	1.20%
		1,547,059		3,371,868		2,880,788		2,387,320	0.00	0	10,187,035	1.88%
GRAND TOTAL	0.00	78,900,000	700.00	151,183,333	575.00	150,383,333	410.00	161,733,334	0.00	0	542,200,000	100.00%
Sub-total by Grant												
ESSER I	-	33,900,000									33,900,000	6.25%
ESSER II	-	45,000,000	500.00	76,650,000	200.00	32,250,000					153,900,000	28.38%
ESSER III - ARP			200.00	74,533,333	375.00	118,133,333	410.00	161,733,334			354,400,000	65.36%
Grand Total		78,900,000	700.00	151,183,333	575.00	150,383,333	410.00	161,733,334	0.00	0	542,200,000	100.00%

Appropriations by Category

Positions (FTE) by Fiscal Year
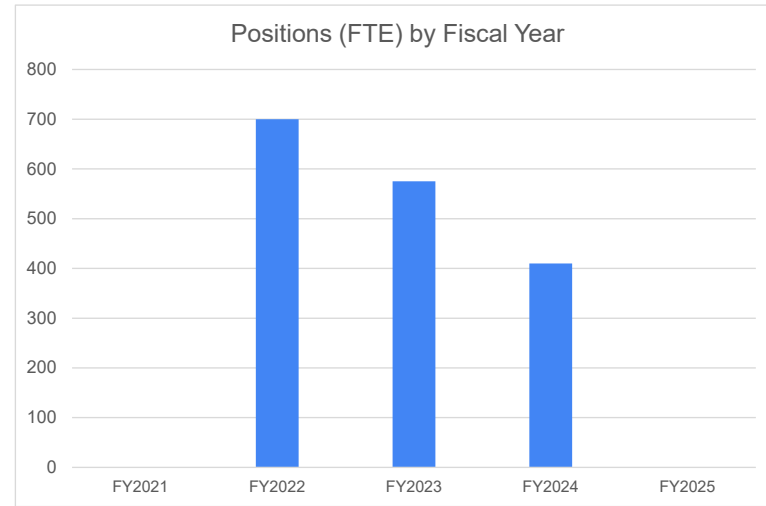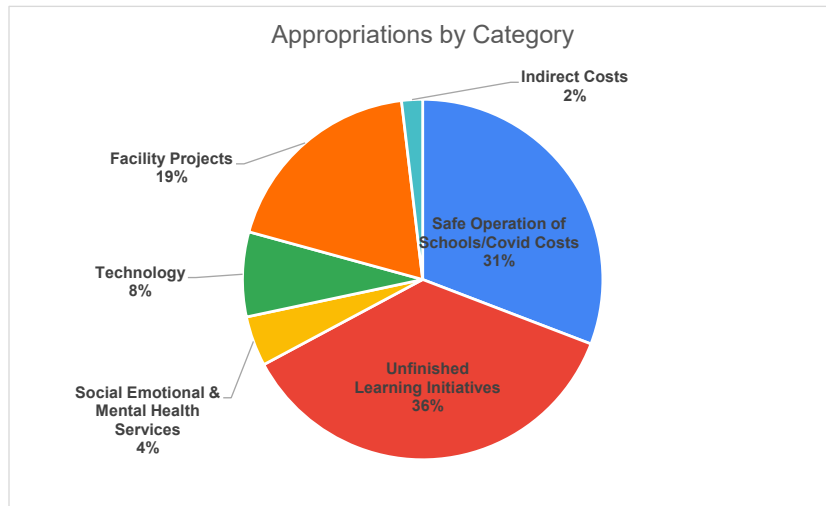
* ESSER funded positions will either be part-time temporary positions or time bound positions that sunset with the grant. District will leverage natural attrition to place teachers and avoid layoffs.

** Please note these allocations will be tiered across schools based on the needs of their students in an equitable manner.

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| 65 | LESSONS LEARNED | 68 | SCHOOL BOARDS | 72 | FINANCE | 84 | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | 90 | RESEARCH & EVALUATION | 97 | APPENDICES |

Public Engagement and Communications Planning

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act signed into law in March by President Biden requires that school districts receiving ESSER funds must, within 30 days of receiving the funds, make publicly available on its website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. In addition, before making the plan publicly available, school districts are required to seek public comment on the plan.

It will be vital for school districts and their communications departments to find ways to effectively engage stakeholders within the school community (staff, students, and parents) as well as external stakeholders (community organizations, public, media)—and do it in a way that builds trust while educating and informing these stakeholders of their efforts.[49]

Three Questions for Public Engagement and Communications Planning

Communications Toolkit for Reopening Schools after COVID-19

Recommendations for Communication Departments September 2020
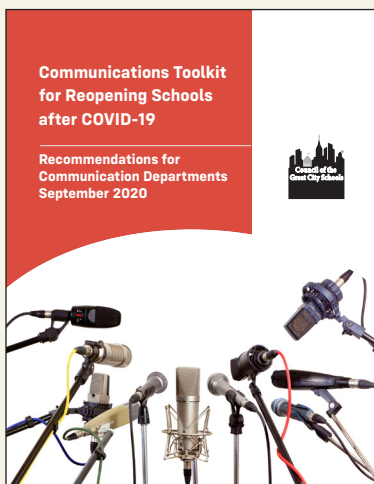
A key part of any engagement is doing it in a way that is authentic, assuring the community that the feedback school districts receive is going to be thoughtfully considered as part of the decision-making. Whether school districts conduct an electronic survey, town hall, community forums, focus groups, etc., to engage people, they should think through the purpose of their engagement efforts and what they want to accomplish.

Effective communications planning is research and evidence-based, and uses many of the same tools embedded in strategic planning and project management. In addition to a detailed ESSER communications and rollout plan, major initiatives and investments will likely require separate communications action plans, messages, and tools that address the diverse needs and preferences of the intended audiences.

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49   Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, September). *Communications toolkit for reopening schools after COVID-19*. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/CGCS_Communications%20Toolkit.pdf

1. **How do you want your school district to effectively engage stakeholders and make them feel that they are a part of the process?**

    ✳ Districts can develop several different ways to effectively gather community input, including **conducting electronic surveys, town halls, live Q&A sessions, webinars, focus groups, and even informational virtual meetings** in which participants are eligible for prizes. The events can be streamed on different communication channels, such as Facebook Live or the district's cable channel with interpretation provided in different languages. In addition, districts can appoint a high-level commission[50] to advise the superintendent and senior-level administrators. The commission would feature various stakeholders, such as parents, educators, the business community, philanthropic organizations, and even critics of the district, and hold public meetings.

    ✳ When districts conduct a survey or any other mechanism to receive feedback, it would be helpful to **list the areas the district is going to focus ESSER funds on, then identify several potential opportunities for investment within those areas**. It also might be helpful to ask people to prioritize what is more important versus less important. Without this framing, community input could be disconnected from the focus on using ESSER funds to improve student learning, making it inactionable or unsustainable in the long term.

    ✳ **Develop a comprehensive framework informed by community feedback.** Provide a framing document that consolidates a common narrative around discussions of how the money will be spent. This will include discussions on how ESSER funds can and cannot be spent. Do it in a positive way so it is focused on student learning. The framing document also needs to be rooted in evidence-based strategies to improve student achievement. The document will provide the district with an education opportunity around why certain investments are on the table and some are not.

    ✳ **Frame your message around the district's goals and vision for ESSER funds and explain the things the district is trying to accomplish.** For example, list the data on learning loss experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and then explain how ESSER funds will help combat learning loss and increase academic achievement. Share information about what ESSER funds can and cannot be used for, and the district's guiding principles for its investments.

    > The "why" is very important for public perception and building trust.

    ✳ **Provide "fast facts" and FAQs about what works to increase student achievement and the barriers that impede achievement**. This will enable the district to say that its decisions are evidence-based and data-driven. Communicate frequently and regularly throughout the planning process, and as funds are being invested.

    ✳ **Clearly explain to people why the district is spending ESSER money in certain areas.** Explaining the **"why"** is an important part of building public trust and buy-in.

    ✳ **Districts should not forget to include in their communications plan that ESSER funds will be used to keep students safe as part of school reopening plans.** Emphasize that funds will be used to provide students with personal protective equipment (PPE), improve ventilation in classrooms, and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Create videos of how reopened schools and transportation on buses will look when schools reopen in the fall.

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50 Boston Public Schools. (2021, April 27). *Superintendent Cassellius announces commission, timeline for deployment of federal stimulus funds.* https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=14&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874 B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=31776&PageID=1

* Whether sharing materials or engaging audiences in virtual or in-person forums, **it is critical to include interpreters and translated materials to ensure you engage all parents and families in your community.** Engaging in authentic discussions in our diverse communities will build trust and help to strengthen your audience's confidence and level of engagement in your efforts.

<div style="background:#f0f2f7;">

WHAT TO AVOID

How do you want your school district to effectively engage stakeholders and make them feel that they are a part of the process?

* Be clear that the district's efforts to spend ESSER funds is a multi-year strategy aligned with the district's strategic plan and priorities. This should be emphasized in the framing document. **Districts need to educate the community that COVID-19 will have a long-term impact and it is going to require long-term investment and solutions.**

* Also, be clear that the district cannot spend ESSER funds on initiatives that cannot continue once those funds are depleted in three years.

* Do not ignore communicating with parents of specialized populations, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and parents of foster children.

* Do not neglect employee (internal) communication. Recognize that research indicates employees prefer to get their information directly from their supervisors, and plan accordingly.

</div>

2. **What are some effective outreach efforts around ESSER funding that school districts can utilize?**

   * **Create a toolkit for principals and other employee supervisors on ESSER funding and give them the tools and training to be able to communicate with staff and parents.** Principals and employee supervisors are trusted individuals and can reach teachers and parents in ways the central office cannot. The toolkit can include: talking points, answers to anticipated questions (for use with staff and families), letter/robocall/text/social media templates for use with families, etc.

   > Help the community understand that the district is being a good steward of taxpayer money.

   * **Create a hashtag or theme around ESSER funds.** Continue to make the issue a priority, helping the community understand that the district is being a good steward of taxpayer money. Communicate frequently and transparently. Employees, parents, and other audiences tend to skim and scan information quickly. Repetition is also key.

   * **Create standard communication tools,** such as press releases,[51] family letters, staff letters, community letters, social media toolkits, videos, roundtable events, and FAQs.

   * **Create a webpage[52] on the district website** where all information on the funding will be posted so the public can track how funds are being spent, keep up on the strategies the district is employing, and stay informed of the measures being used to gauge student outcomes.

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51 Chicago Public Schools. (2021, April). *CPS invests $225 million in additional school funding to address critical needs created by COVID-19 and support daily in-person instruction next year.* https://www.cps.edu/press-releases/cps-invests-$225-million-in-additional-school-funding-to-address-critical-needs-created-by-covid-19-and-support-daily-in-person-instruction-next-year/

52 Boston Public Schools. (2021). *Federal relief funding.* https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/8648

❋ **Focus on visual storytelling**, such as creating short videos and testimonials. People tend to read less, especially in today's over-saturated information age. Put a human face on the issues and tell how the money is affecting students in real time. Marshall the facts and frame the argument and then communicate the emotion of it in terms of the impact on students and staff. Leverage all these visuals on your district's communication channels in multiple ways and multiple times.

❋ **Explain the district's spending in simple, easy-to-understand-ways** using communication tools, such as infographics, which are graphic visual representations of information or data intended to present information quickly and clearly.

❋ **When thinking about stakeholders, also think about local education advocacy groups.** If those groups are aligned around the district's vision, they could be helpful in bolstering the district's credibility.

❋ **Create a timeline around engagement, planning, and announcements of ESSER funds and your plans for them.** Districts also need to prioritize which stakeholder groups will receive the information first and carefully sequence that communication, so for example, principals get the communication before the community.

❋ **Districts might want to consider embedding or tying their efforts around ESSER spending into their multi-year strategic plans.** Those plans serve as roadmaps for how the district will reach its goals.

WHAT TO AVOID

What are some effective outreach efforts around ESSER funding that school districts can utilize?

✳ **Do not neglect internal audiences.** Engaging employees and support staff is critical because they are informational ambassadors to parents and the community. Also, one-size-fits-all communication is generally not effective. Communications should be personalized and targeted to specific groups. The message can be the same, but the delivery of that message may need to be tweaked, depending on the audience.

✳ The same applies to external audiences. **Do not combine all community stakeholders into one group.** Also, find the opinion leaders in each group and mobilize them. Identify the key influencer groups, such as faith leaders, and make them ambassadors of your message.

  – Continue to engage community philanthropic organizations that may feel their efforts are no longer needed given the influx of federal dollars. Keep nurturing those relationships and be clear about how they can continue to support your schools and students in ways that can complement the ESSER funds investment strategy.

✳ **Do not forget to engage students in ESSER messaging,** particularly older students. These students will have valuable opinions on what kinds of changes or enhancements are needed as a result of their experiences in the classroom. Engage the students through a monthly superintendent advisory council, town hall, etc., exclusive to students.

✳ **Do not ignore communicating your efforts to state legislators and local elected officials,** whose support is crucial and can help the district build goodwill. Be intentional about the need for sustained state and local funding levels, emphasizing early and often that now is not the time to cut funding to schools.

3. **What are some of the ways districts could use ESSER funding to communicate the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on students, educators, and staff; and how they will use ARP funds?**

  ✳ **Implement grassroots engagement.** Many districts experienced a loss in enrollment because of COVID-19. Districts can use ESSER funding to hire community, parent, and student ambassadors/liaisons to implement door-knocking campaigns in local neighborhoods aimed at increasing enrollment.

  ✳ **Create a campaign around ESSER funding.** If needed, use an outside firm to help with parent and community outreach as well as parent and community engagement.

  ✳ **Improve database communications.** Develop a robust database of key stakeholders in the community. Identify staff focused on creating and keeping contacts updated. Share information with key stakeholders frequently, and ask them to help the district spread the word to others in their personal and professional networks.

  ✳ **Ensure good record-keeping.** Districts must be able to explain how they spent ESSER funds, why they chose certain investments, and what were the results of those investments. The more that data is captured and made readily available, the more the district will earn the trust of its stakeholders.

❋ **Partner with other departments,** such as academics or curriculum, and build a communications budget into their initiatives.

Final Thoughts on Public Engagement and Communications Planning

It is important that communications play a critical role in the strategies districts use in formulating how ESSER funds are spent. The district needs to effectively engage employees, parents, and the community around how it plans to spend ESSER dollars. The district needs to educate and inform the public on its efforts, and the district needs to build trust and transparency around how it will deploy these unprecedented resources. Communications cannot be an afterthought, and the Communications Department will need to be at the table from the beginning as districts actively discuss and plan to use ESSER funds. Also, district leadership should develop realistic timelines for the communications team, realizing that strategic communication is evidence- and research-based, and that it takes time to develop effective strategies and compelling stories, messages, images, and tools.

Also, districts and their communications departments should develop metrics to ensure short-range output targets and longer-range goals are being met. Such metrics or key performance indicators will help the community set realistic expectations and understand the long-term nature of this effort.

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Assessing the Impact and Distribution of Federal ARP Funds: Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Guidance for Districts[53]

Urban school districts and their research and evaluation staff need to play a critical role in helping establish the research basis for the proposed investments or the theory of action for innovative investments; track and report expenditures to connect them to proposed outcomes; and issue reports on the impact of investments on mitigating post-pandemic unfinished learning and closing pre-pandemic gaps in student achievement.[54]

Five Questions for Assessing the Impact and Distribution of Federal ARP Funds

The following questions are intended to help guide districts and their research departments, along with related considerations and recommendations—

Ensuring a Data-Driven Approach to Reopening Schools After COVID-19

Recommendations for Research and Assessment
June 2020

1. **Has your district established a theory of action/improvement that connects the proposed expenditures to tangible outcomes?**

   ❉ District planning for investments should **employ best practices in strategic thinking and decision-making** (such as the "5 Whys"[55] process of root cause analysis) and **connect proposed initiatives to expected outcomes** using logic models and the articulation of a clear theory of action.[56]

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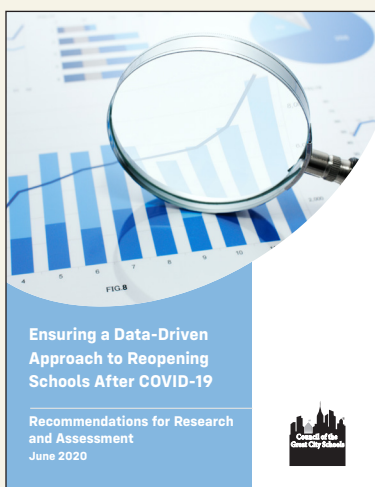
53 The Council of the Great City Schools would like to thank Russell Brown — Portland Public Schools, Theresa Jones — Baltimore City Public Schools, and Melanie Stewart — Milwaukee Public Schools for their time and contributions to the development of this resource for member districts.

54 Council of the Great City Schools. (2020, June). *Ensuring a data-driven approach to reopening schools after COVID-19: Recommendations for research and assessment.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/Data-Driven%20Approach%20to%20Reopening%20Schools.pdf

55 School Reform Initiative. (n.d.). *The 5 whys for inquiry.* http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/5_whys.pdf

56 Center for Educational Leadership. (n.d.). *Creating a theory of action tool.* https://info.k-12leadership.org/creating-a-theory-of-action

* The Council recommends that district leaders work with their research staff to transform their theory of action into a logic model that connects proposed expenditures and investments in staff, materials, services, and facilities (Inputs) to their anticipated district activities and support systems (Processes); intermediate changes (Outputs); and short-, intermediate-, and long-term effects (Outcomes). (See Appendix C for an example.)

* Logic models should be used for smaller pieces of the work—not just the high-level enterprise initiatives. Literacy, mathematics, science, and other teams should all connect their work to theories of action and logic models that provide guidance to department-level work.

* The theory of action and the logic model should clearly reflect equity considerations for project plans and outcomes with the goal of ensuring students in need receive higher per-unit support.

* Research staff should work with district leaders to establish the process of setting investment priorities that begin with a **comprehensive assessment of student academic and social-emotional needs** based on a clear vision of how the district defines student success. Collect quantitative and qualitative data on existing initiatives and projects as well as current strengths and weaknesses in instruction and mental health support systems. Assess how potential investments will address these needs and build sustainable systemwide capacity.

* Prior research or lessons learned from implementation in large, urban district contexts should inform investment decisions and should be addressed in the theory of action. For innovative programs, the theory of action should clearly connect proposed activities to desired outcomes.

* The district should assess whether its research department has the capacity to connect funds tracked by finance departments to student and staff outcomes and has the appropriate data collection infrastructure to assess program or project implementation fidelity. Where additional capacity is needed, districts should investigate contracting with external evaluators to assess the impact of investments on desired outcomes.

> Prior research or lessons learned from implementation in large, urban district contexts should inform investment decisions.

* The district might consider setting up a Project Management Office (PMO) that sets, maintains, and ensures standards for project management across all departments in the district to help coordinate and oversee initiatives funded by ARP. Part of the research and evaluation process for districts is ensuring that projects stay on time (investments must be procured, implemented, and show outcomes in three years), stay on budget, and maintain implementation fidelity. Investment dependencies (such as procurement, professional development, etc.) should be identified to ensure there are no bottlenecks that impede implementation, and interim process/progress measures should be established to assess leading indicators that would allow for program adjustments if needed.

* Project management teams should determine how investment streams can be blended or braided so they do not burden school leaders and teachers in their day-to-day work. **It is important that strategies and projects funded throughout the district are cohesive and integrated to ensure that leaders are not asked to implement competing initiatives.** Multiple initiatives that require the same staff to implement often falter because of diffused focus.

✵ The district might also make sure that it has adequate training for all staff on a baseline understanding of *Project Management* and developing *Theories of Action* with *Logic Models* to build a common vocabulary and practices across departments and schools. The training should include a basic understanding of data analysis and continuous improvement processes.

2. **What metrics and assessments are you using to analyze the impact of investments and help determine those that have the greatest potential to track student and district progress?**

✵ Districts should plan to assess the fidelity of implementation of programs, services, and materials across classrooms and schools in the district. Evaluating outcomes can potentially lead to misinterpretations of results if the quality of implementation is not clearly defined and reported.

> Evaluating outcomes can potentially lead to misinterpretations of results if the quality of implementation is not clearly defined and reported.

✵ Districts should assess the effectiveness of programs, services, and materials on a variety of student groups (e.g., students with disabilities, English learners, low-income students, homeless students, students receiving public assistance) to ensure investments accrue to the benefit of traditionally underperforming students relative to their higher performing peers. The goal of investments is to close pre- and post-pandemic gaps in learning across student groups and eliminate disproportionality.

✵ Budget requests from departments and schools should include[57]—

– A description of what a successful investment implementation will look like and how key stakeholders, including parents and the community, will be engaged in the investment.

– A description of barriers to successful implementation and how the barriers will be addressed.

– A description of support needed from other departments required for successful implementation.

– A timeline for full implementation and expected results.

– A description of the outcomes that will determine investment success with comparisons to baseline data or prior cohorts.

✵ Districts should prioritize research practices that focus on building a common expectation for exemplary Tier I instruction and student work expectations.

– Districts should create rubrics that clearly identify expectations for high-level Tier I instruction and student work. Samples of rubric results from **informal, non-evaluative** classroom walk-throughs should be reviewed periodically to ascertain improvements in classroom practices and instruction.

– Coaches, school leaders, and central office school leaders and curriculum staff should **periodically calibrate instructional and student work expectations** through video reviews and joint classroom walk-throughs.

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57 Adopted from the *Budget Request Proposal* developed by the Baltimore City Public Schools courtesy of Theresa Jones.

✳ The Council recommends districts join assessment consortia[58] based on schools using like benchmark assessments across the country. These consortia would allow districts to benchmark their investment outcomes against the outcomes of peers across the country. We propose comparing outcomes based on student group matching from the previous recommendation.

– Consortium A: CGCS schools using Star Reading and Math.

– Consortium B: CGCS schools using Measures of Academic Progress.

– Consortium C: CGCS schools using i-Ready Assessments.

– Consortium D: CGCS schools using Amplify DIBELs 8.

– Consortium E: CGCS schools using ACCESS for ELLs.

– Consortium F: CGCS schools using the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

– Consortium G: Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) school districts taking NAEP.

– Other CGCS consortia as identified for early childhood, elementary, students with disabilities, or English learners.

Another option might be for member districts that are using similar tools and assessments to form their own research consortia with ARP funds to test the efficacy of what they are doing. Also, districts might want to think about banding together to work out and evaluate innovative approaches for vexing issues in urban education, e.g., supporting English learners, particularly newcomers; experimenting with differing approaches for assessing "students with interrupted formal education" (SIFE); trying out new grading policies or scheduling options; assessing the effects of "culturally responsive" curriculum and materials; innovating with writing instruction; evaluating student attainment results from diversifying the teacher workforce; experimenting with high school mathematics pathways; and many others.

ACADEMIC KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
2020 REPORT

✳ Consider annual metrics from the 2020 CGCS report *Academic Key Performance Indicators*[59] as a valuable resource to help identify potential metrics. These include Algebra I completion rates, Advanced Placement (AP) participation and performance, etc.

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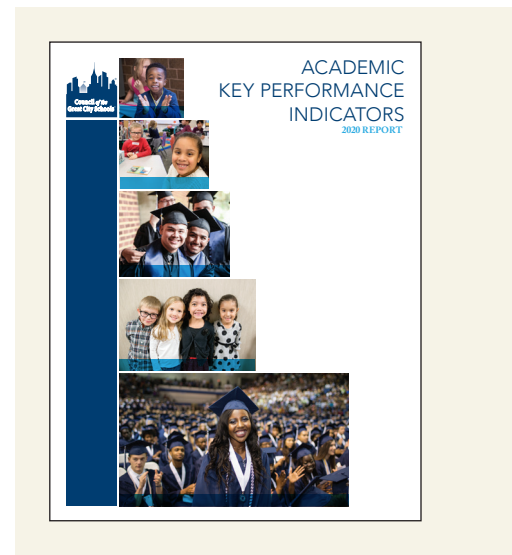
58 The Council has the requisite data and information to support forming these consortia.

59 Palacios, M., Vignola, E., Lyons, R., Hart, R., & Casserly, M. (2020, October). *Academic key performance indicators: 2020 report. Council of the Great City Schools.* https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Academic%20KPI%20Report%202020%20Final.pdf

✳ Metrics for student outcomes could include—

CATEGORY	SAMPLE INDICATORS	SUGGESTED TOOLS
Behavior	✳ Discipline referrals ✳ Program attendance ✳ Behavioral referrals ✳ Suspension rates ✳ Pregnancy rates ✳ High school graduation rates ✳ Grade-level promotion rates ✳ Retention rates	✳ Student-level administrative data ✳ Senior Exit Survey ✳ Youth Risk Behavior Survey (school) ✳ Pre-post surveys (attitudes, beliefs, knowledge) ✳ Student attendance
Academic achievement	✳ Student performance on national, state, or district assessments ✳ Grade point average ✳ Core course failures ✳ Teacher reports of student performance ✳ Subject-specific skills related to standards ✳ Critical thinking and analysis skills ✳ Analysis of sample student work products	✳ Local benchmark, state, and national (e.g., ACT, NAEP) assessments ✳ Teacher reports ✳ Student assignments ✳ Student grade reports ✳ Assessments for subject-specific skills related to standards ✳ Writing samples ✳ Student projects
Socio-emotional	✳ Growth mindset ✳ Self-efficacy ✳ Academic mindset ✳ School pride ✳ Student empowerment ✳ Confidence ✳ Empathy ✳ Community mindset ✳ Environmental consciousness ✳ Peer relationships ✳ Resiliency skills ✳ Self-regulation ✳ Impulse control ✳ Focus ✳ Kindness ✳ Goal setting ✳ Student engagement	✳ Pre-post surveys (attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, or responsible decision-making) ✳ School Culture and Climate Survey ✳ Youth Risk Behavior Survey ✳ Student-level administration data (that is, incident referrals and suspensions)

CATEGORY	SAMPLE INDICATORS	SUGGESTED TOOLS
Postsecondary education	❋ Postsecondary aspirations ❋ Postsecondary credentials ❋ College applications ❋ College acceptance ❋ College enrollment ❋ College completion ❋ College retention ❋ Career and Technical Education certification ❋ Post-high school placement in an alternative pathway (for example, service program, enlistment in the military, or entrance into a career field of interest with the opportunity for long-term growth)	❋ Follow-up student surveys ❋ Data on postsecondary readiness ❋ Data on postsecondary enrollment ❋ Student narratives ❋ Senior Exit Survey ❋ Program credentials (e.g., IT certifications, automotive credentials)

3. **Do you have metrics that would enable your district to track and demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of these federal funds?**

   ❋ Research and evaluation teams should coordinate data sharing with the finance department to connect the expenditure of funds to investment outcomes, including estimates for the return on investment (ROI) calculations.

   ❋ There should be formal and effective use of cross-functional working groups and communications channels to coordinate plans, goals, priorities, major initiatives, programs, and projects.

4. **How will your district report outcomes from the investment of these federal funds to various stakeholders and the community at large?**

   ❋ The research and evaluation team should work closely with your superintendent and communications team on a communications plan that begins with public input on proposed investments, includes a forum and cadence for periodic updates throughout the grant period, and ultimately concludes with reported accomplishments and ROI.

   – This cadence should include routine reports to the school board and the public on metrics and outcomes (e.g., monthly reports on different metrics during the school year and summer as data are available).

   – The cadence should include expectations for when investments are expected to produce results. Some investments will take a quarter or semester to produce results, while others may take two to three years. Expectations should be established prior to moving forward with investments.

   ❋ Research teams should consider developing an investment and outcomes dashboard on the district website to ensure transparency in sharing activities and results with the public.

   ❋ The Council will ask member districts to share investments and outcomes nationally for periodic reports to Congress and federal agencies. Requests may include de-identified data sets for cross-district analysis of common investments, such as summer programming, tutoring programs, extended day, extended year programs, etc.

5. **Do research, evaluation, and assessment directors have a seat at the table in determining the investment of these funds at your district?**

   ❋ It is critical that the **district's research, evaluation, and assessment directors are recognized as strategic thought partners and are included from the onset** in the planning, implementation, and reporting of all investments.

   ❋ Planning without an understanding of root causes of problems or without a clear articulation of expected outcomes in mind is likely to result in the inability to ascertain the impact of strategic investments on desired outcomes.

   ❋ This work necessitates deployment of a cross-functional team that includes the research, evaluation, and assessment subject matter experts to assess student needs, evaluate effectiveness of current teaching and learning practices, analyze potential investments, establish metrics to measure return on investment (ROI), and ensure strong project management is in place.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do research, evaluation, and assessment directors have a seat at the table in determining the investment of these funds at your district?

❋ Avoid excluding research and evaluation staff or research consultants from the beginning of the planning process. Plans should include root cause analysis and discussions of evaluation from the outset.

❋ Avoid developing recommendations in silos by convening a cross-functional internal planning team to develop well-vetted, informed recommendations.

❋ Districts should not quickly abandon efforts that show insignificant increases in student achievement.

  – Adjusting certain programs, such as after-school programs, to ensure the content and fidelity of implementation of the programs are sound is more important than deciding that after-school programs for students are not beneficial.

❋ Programs that help level the achievement growth of students are often quite valuable despite not showing significant improvements in student achievement. For example, removing tutoring programs for students with special needs that result in equivalent growth metrics compared to their peers may result in significant declines if discontinued. In other words, programs that help maintain parallel growth may be beneficial. Infusing additional time and resources to accelerate.

❋ Avoid relying on single measures of progress or only quantitative data.

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APPENDIX A

American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Overview

Major Funding for K-12 Schools

* $122.8 billion for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund (U.S. Department of Education)

  - $800 million of ESSER is for a U.S. Department of Education program for school-based and wrap-around services to help homeless children and youth fully participate in school activities

  - $122 billion for ESSER Grants to States, with 90% required pass-through to school districts

    a. School districts must reserve at least 20% of their total allocation for learning loss activities

    b. The state is allowed a maximum of 10% reservation of funds, and is required to use 5% for learning loss activities, 1% for summer enrichment, 1% for afterschool programs, and ½% for state administration, with the remainder for COVID-related emergency needs determined by the SEA via grants and contracts

    c. There are no required private school services for school districts with the American Rescue Plan ESSER funds (non-public schools funded separately at the state level)

* Approximately $3 billion for IDEA, with $2.58 billion for IDEA Part B grants, $200 million for IDEA Preschool program and $250 million for IDEA Infant and Toddler grants (*U.S. Department of Education*)

* $39 billion is provided for child care with $15 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and $24 billion to create a stabilization fund for eligible child care providers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

* $1 billion for Head Start (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

* $10 billion to expand COVID-19 testing for schools (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

* $7 billion for school districts and libraries under the Emergency Connectivity Fund for an E-Rate-like program to support technology connected devices and home connectivity (*Federal Communications Commission*)

Use of Funds

NATIONAL $122.8 billion	**Required Uses** • $122 billion to States • $800 million: Homeless children and youth

STATES $122 billion	**Required Uses** • 90%: $109.8 billion to school districts • 5%: Learning loss • 1%: Summer enrichment programs • 1%: Afterschool programs • 0.5%: State administration

SCHOOL DISTRICTS $109.8 billion	**Required Uses** • 20%: Learning loss • Remainder for allowable uses of funds

STATES – USE OF FUNDS

❋ States must allocate not less than 90 percent of the State grant funds as subgrants to local educational agencies based on the school district's share of Title I within the State.

❋ States must use the remaining funds to respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on students (specifically those identified by gender, major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care by spending:

– Not less than 5 percent of the total amount of the State grant funds to carry out, directly or through grants or contracts, activities to address learning loss by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs; and

– Not less than 1 percent of the total amount of the State grant funds to carry out, directly or through grants or contracts, the implementation of evidence-based summer enrichment programs; and

– Not less than 1 percent of the total amount of the State grant funds to carry out, directly or through grants or contracts, the implementation of evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs.

* States may reserve not more than one-half of 1 percent of the total amount of the State grant funds for administrative costs and the remainder for emergency needs as determined by the State educational agency.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS – USE OF FUNDS

* School districts must use not less than 20 percent of ESSER funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on students (specifically those identified by gender, major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care).

* School districts must use the remaining funds for any of the following:

    – Any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

    – Any activity authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

    – Any activity authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

    – Any activity authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

    – Coordination of preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments, and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

    – Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population.

    – Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies.

    – Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.

    – Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency.

    – Planning for, coordinating, and implementing activities during long-term closures, including providing meals to eligible students, providing technology for online learning to all students, providing guidance for carrying out requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and ensuring other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all Federal, State, and local requirements.

    – Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and children with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

- Providing mental health services and supports, including through the implementation of evidence-based full-service community schools.

- Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

- Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care, of the local educational agency, including by—

    • administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction;

    • implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students;

    • providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment; and

    • tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.

- School facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs.

- Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement.

- Developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

- Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local educational agency.

Additional Provisions of Note for School Districts

Section 2004(c)
Local Educational Agency Maintenance of Equity for High-Poverty Schools

(1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of receiving funds under section 2001, a local educational agency shall not, in fiscal year 2022 or 2023—

(A) reduce per-pupil funding (from combined State and local funding) for any high-poverty school served by such local educational agency by an amount that exceeds—

(i) the total reduction in local educational agency funding (from combined State and local funding) for all schools served by the local educational agency in such fiscal year (if any); divided by

      (ii) the number of children enrolled in all schools served by the local educational agency in such fiscal year; or

   (B) reduce per-pupil, full-time equivalent staff in any high-poverty school by an amount that exceeds—

      (i) the total reduction in full-time equivalent staff in all schools served by such local educational agency in such fiscal year (if any); divided by

      (ii) the number of children enrolled in all schools served by the local educational agency in such fiscal year.

(2) EXCEPTION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to a local educational agency in fiscal year 2022 or 2023 that meets at least 1 of the following criteria in such fiscal year:

   (A) Such local educational agency has a total enrollment of less than 1,000 students.

   (B) Such local educational agency operates a single school.

   (C) Such local educational agency serves all students within each grade span with a single school.

   (D) Such local educational agency demonstrates an exceptional or uncontrollable circumstance, such as unpredictable changes in student enrollment or a precipitous decline in the financial resources of such agency, as determined by the Secretary of Education.

Definition
High Poverty School

   (A) IN GENERAL.—The term "high-poverty school" means, with respect to a school served by a local educational agency, a school that is in the highest quartile of schools served by such local educational agency based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students served, as determined by the State in accordance with subparagraph (B).

   (B) DETERMINATION.—In making the determination under subparagraph (A), a State shall select a measure of poverty established for the purposes of this paragraph by the Secretary of Education and apply such measure consistently to all schools in the State.

Section 2001(i)
Safe Return to In-Person Instruction

(1) IN GENERAL.—A local educational agency receiving funds under this section shall develop and make publicly available on the local educational agency's website, not later than 30 days after receiving the allocation of [ESSER] funds described in paragraph (d)(1), a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.

(2) COMMENT PERIOD.—Before making the plan described in paragraph (1) publicly available, the local educational agency shall seek public comment on the plan and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.

(3) PREVIOUS PLANS.—If a local educational agency has developed a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction before the date of enactment of this Act that meets the requirements described in paragraphs (1) and (2), such plan shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements under this subsection.

APPENDIX B

Decision Recording Sheets for ELA/Mathematics Materials

The *Decision Recording Sheets* for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics are extracted from the *Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool — Quality Review* for Kindergarten.

ELA/Literacy Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool
Quality Review

Mathematics Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool
Quality Review

ELA/Literacy Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool

Quality Review

GRADES K-1

Council of the Great City Schools

Textbooks and their digital counterparts are not only vital classroom tools but also a major expense, and it is worth taking time to find the best quality materials for students and teachers. While there is no perfect set of materials or textbooks, this Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET-QR) is designed for use by professionals as a framework for evaluating the quality of instructional materials and choosing materials that are best suited to provide a coherent learning experience for students.

The district should begin its textbook adoption process by screening an entire publisher series with the Instructional Materials Evaluation Toolkit (IMET), developed by Student Achievement Partners, to see which ones are worthy of deeper consideration. The IMET, built on the Publishers' Criteria for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics, has two major non-negotiable sections and seven alignment sections. The GIMET-QR mirrors that structure, providing key criteria for each individual grade. But rather than providing an exhaustive list of grade-level standards, GIMET-QR focuses on the most distinctive, key features of the standards by grade, allowing for more in-depth analysis of the quality of the content and the instructional design of the materials—the rigor called for in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

This document contains Guiding Statements along with references to the CCSS. In response to each Guiding Statement, reviewers are asked to cite specific supporting evidence from the materials themselves, rather than relying on the table of contents or the topic headings. Evidence should include scaffolding to support ALL students including English language learners, students with identified disabilities, and struggling readers with the expectation that they learn and achieve the grade-level standards. This supporting evidence can then be used to rate whether and to what degree the criteria have been met. In some cases, reviewers will want to click on the reference links to obtain more detailed information from the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands of the CCSS, as well as the CCSS Appendices.

The review process culminates with a summary in which reviewers cite strengths and weaknesses of the product, thus providing explicit details for the overall assessment. The summary may also indicate any areas that district curriculum leaders may need to augment or supplement prior to making a recommendation for purchase.

Please note: Acrobat Reader or Adobe Acrobat is required to complete this form electronically and save any data entered by users.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS DECISION RECORDING SHEET

DECISION RECORDING SHEET

Completed by: _____   Date: _____

Based on the substantial evidence collected and the analysis you have done as you reviewed these materials, complete the following form. Please add comments about what influenced your decision in each of the areas listed below.

RUBRIC SECTION	QUALITATIVE SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE	RATING
Non-Negotiable 1: Text Complexity		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Non-Negotiable 2: Questions and Tasks		○ meets ○ does not meet
Alignment Criterion I: Range and Quality of Texts		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Alignment Criterion II: Questions and Tasks Support Student Learning		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Alignment Criterion III: Writing to Sources and Research		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak

RUBRIC SECTION	QUALITATIVE SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE	RATING
Alignment Criterion IV: Foundational Skills		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Alignment Criterion V: Language		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Alignment Criterion VI: Speaking and Listening		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak
Alignment Criterion VII: Scaffolding and Supports		○ 4) extensive ○ 3) sufficient ○ 2) some ○ 1) weak

OVERALL RATING: ○ 4) extensive evidence   ○ 3) sufficient evidence   ○ 2) some evidence   ○ 1) weak evidence

GENERAL COMMENTS:

MATHEMATICS DECISION RECORDING SHEET

Mathematics Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool

Quality Review

GRADE K

Textbooks and their digital counterparts are vital classroom tools but also a major expense, and it is worth taking time to find the best quality materials for students and teachers. While there is no perfect set of materials or textbooks, this Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET-QR) is designed for use by professionals as a framework for evaluating the quality of instructional materials and choosing materials that are best suited to provide a coherent learning experience for students.

The district should begin its textbook adoption process by screening an entire publisher series with the Instructional Materials Evaluation Toolkit (IMET), developed by Student Achievement Partners, to see which ones are worthy of deeper consideration. The GIMET-QR can then be used to evaluate materials *for each individual grade*. But rather than providing an exhaustive list of grade-level standards, GIMET-QR starts with the progression to algebra continuum as the major area of focus, allowing for the in-depth review of a smaller set of mathematical concepts covered in the Common Core State Standards Mathematics (CCSS-M) at each grade level.

The GIMET-QR focuses on both the quality of the *content* and the instructional *design* of materials—with a specific focus on evaluating whether materials contain a balance of the three components of rigor (conceptual understanding, applications, and fluency) called for in CCSS-M. Unlike many tools that evaluate the presence or absence of required content, the GIMET-QR prompts reviewers to ask, "How *well* do the materials and assignments reflect and support the rigor of the CCSS-M?"

To answer this question, GIMET-QR contains Guiding Statements along with references to the CCSS for each statement. In response to each Guiding Statement, reviewers are asked to cite specific supporting evidence from the materials themselves, rather than relying on the table of contents or the topic headings. This supporting evidence can then be used to rate whether and to what degree the criteria have been met so that all students have access to a quality mathematics program.

It is important to keep in mind that quality is not defined as "compliance" or a mere checklist of topics. The GIMET-QR aims to help schools and districts choose materials that will provide the best overall learning experience for their students. The distinctive features of instructional materials, like style and appeal that contribute to engaging students in mathematics, should therefore be considered along with the mathematical content and cognitive demand.

The review process culminates with a summary in which reviewers cite strengths and weaknesses of the product, thus providing explicit details for the overall assessment. The summary may also indicate, prior to making a recommendation for purchase, any areas that district curriculum leaders may need to augment or supplement.

Please note: Acrobat Reader or Adobe Acrobat is required to complete this form electronically and save any data entered by users.

II. DECISION RECORDING SHEET

Completed by: _____   Date: _____

Use the evidence that you collected for kindergarten to begin judging the overall quality of the program. Begin by answering the overarching question: **How well do the materials reflect and support the rigor of the CCSS-M?** *Use the accompanying rubric which describes the criteria for high quality/exciting materials and assignments that support teachers and engage students.*

Rigor requirement (balance): A program that emphasizes only fluency is not rigorous. Likewise, a program that only focuses on conceptual understanding or applications is not rigorous. For a program to be rigorous, there must be a balance of all three (conceptual understanding, applications, and fluency). By the end of kindergarten, there are specific fluency requirements (adding and subtracting within 5) and standards addressing procedural skill (procedural skill refers to knowledge of procedures, knowledge of when and how to use them appropriately, and skill in performing procedures flexibly, accurately, and efficiently). While procedural skill is not as prevalent in kindergarten, it will be more important in later grades.

Criteria for Rigor and Quality in Conceptual Understanding, Applications, and Fluency

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: **CONNECTIONS**

Materials:	**Assignments:**

■ How well do the materials develop conceptual understanding of operations and algebraic thinking as defined in the CCSS-M and in the *Progression to Algebra (Appendix A)*?
■ How well do the materials connect to and extend prior knowledge?
  ● The materials present and describe explicit connections to prior knowledge, connections among mathematical ideas, and connections among different mathematical representations, using appropriate academic language.
■ How well do the materials develop academic language (including words, phrases, and sentences using symbols, graphs, and diagrams)?
	How well do the assignments prompt students to produce explanations and viable arguments?
	  ● The set of assignments challenge students to use their mathematical knowledge, academic language, and skills to solve problems and formulate mathematical models in a variety of contexts.
	■ How well do the assignments ask students to make explicit connections to prior knowledge, connections among mathematical ideas, and connections among different mathematical representations?

CONNECTIONS: CRITERIA FOR MEETING THE RATING OF "HIGH QUALITY/EXCITING"		
	Materials *The materials present and describe explicit connections to prior knowledge, connections among mathematical ideas, and connections among different mathematical representations, using appropriate academic language.*	**Assignments** *The assignments in the materials encourage and challenge students to use their mathematical knowledge, academic language, and skills to solve problems and formulate mathematical models in a variety of contexts.*
Student	*Using high quality/exciting materials, my students will:* ■ comprehend the concepts and connections in the materials. ■ make sense of the mathematics. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ want to learn the mathematical concepts and gain confidence that effort to learn will pay off.	*Using high quality/exciting assignments, my students will:* ■ engage in the challenge of comprehension and discussion. ■ make sense of the mathematics. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ want to learn the mathematical concepts and gain confidence that their effort to learn will pay off.
Teacher	*Using high quality/exciting materials will help me:* ■ see and understand the mathematical goals of the lesson/unit. ■ understand better the mathematics that I am teaching, learn more mathematics from the materials, and want to learn more from interacting with students. ■ be excited about teaching the lessons and see how students respond to the connections in the lesson/unit. ■ focus students' efforts on the mathematical connections and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, missing connections, and which struggles will be most productive for students. ■ be confident students will be motivated to learn from and connect the mathematics, as well as gain confidence that their efforts to learn will pay off.	*Using high quality/exciting assignments will help me:* ■ want to learn more from interacting with students, analyzing their work on assignments, and re-engaging them in the concepts related to the assignments. ■ use students' responses to focus their efforts on the mathematical connections and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, missing connections, and which struggles will be most productive for students. ■ know students will be motivated to learn from and connect the mathematics as well as gain confidence that their efforts to learn will pay off.

RATING – Compared to the criteria listed above, the materials I have just reviewed would be considered:

☐ 3) High Quality/Exciting   ○ 2) Good Quality   ○ 1) Minimal Quality

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: **EXPLANATIONS**	
Materials:	**Assignments:**

■ How well do the materials provide example explanations connecting different representations to show why a statement or steps in an argument or solution is true and under what conditions it is true?
 	
   ● The materials provide example explanations, using appropriate concepts and academic language for the grade level, to show how a way of thinking about a problem makes sense using several representations and explicitly identifying correspondences across representations.
 	
■ How well do the materials use abstractions and generalizations to communicate the mathematical structure that organizes seemingly scattered individual events or results?
	How well do the assignments require that student provide explanations using appropriate content and grade-level academic language?
	
	   ● The set of assignments requires students to use appropriate content and grade-level academic language to explain why reasons and justifications for steps in a solution or an argument are valid and how the mathematical structure represents generalizations about a problem situation (context) mathematically to their peers and the teacher.
	
	■ How well do the assignments ask students to use the mathematical structure to organize individual, seemingly scattered statements or results to represent generalizations mathematically to their peers and the teacher?

EXPLANATIONS: CRITERIA FOR MEETING THE RATING OF **"HIGH QUALITY/EXCITING"**		
	Materials	**Assignments**
	The materials provide example explanations, using appropriate concepts and academic language for the grade level, to show how a way of thinking about a problem makes sense using several representations and explicitly identifying correspondences across representations.	*The assignments require students to use appropriate grade-level concepts and academic language to explain why reasons and justifications for steps in a solution or an argument are valid and how the mathematical structure represents generalizations about a problem situation (context) mathematically to their peers and the teacher.*
Student	*Using high quality/exciting materials, my students will:* ■ comprehend the explanations presented in the materials. ■ make sense of the mathematics of the lesson/unit. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ want to learn the related mathematical concepts and gain confidence that their effort to learn will pay off.	*Using high quality/exciting materials, my students will:* ■ engage in the challenge of comprehension and explanation with their peers and with me. ■ make sense of the mathematics of the lesson/unit. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ want to learn the related mathematical concepts and gain confidence that their effort to learn will pay off.

Teacher	*Using high quality/exciting materials will help me:*	*Using high quality/exciting materials will help me:*
	■ see and understand the mathematical goals of the lesson/unit. ■ understand better the mathematics that I am teaching, learn more mathematics from the materials, and want to learn more from interacting with students. ■ be excited about teaching the lessons and see how students respond to the explanations in the lesson/unit. ■ focus students' efforts on the mathematical explanations and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, struggles that are most productive for students, and ways to help students to revise their explanation.	■ want to learn more from interacting with students, analyzing their work on assignments, and re-engaging them on the concepts related to the assignments. ■ use students' responses to focus their efforts on the mathematical connections and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, struggles that are most productive for students, and ways to help students revise their explanations. ■ know students will be motivated to learn from and connect the mathematics as well as gain confidence that their efforts to learn will pay off. ■ prompt students to make their mathematical explanations clear in a way that others can understand and critique them.

RATING – Compared to the criteria listed above, the materials I have just reviewed would be considered:

☑ 3) High Quality/Exciting   ◯ 2) Good Quality   ◯ 1) Minimal Quality

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APPLICATIONS

Materials

How well do the materials develop students' expertise in the application of concepts appropriate for this grade level?

- The materials show how to use mathematics to analyze problem situations, appropriate for the grade level, and provide examples of deploying the Standards for Mathematical Practice to make sense of problems.

■ How well do the materials support students' understanding of how to analyze problem situations, showing how to use mathematics to help make sense of problems?

Assignments

How well do the assignments develop the application of grade-level concepts?

- The assignments prompt students to use mathematics and the Standards for Mathematical Practice to help them make sense of a variety of problems and formulate mathematical models of real-world phenomena appropriate for this grade level.

■ How well do the assignments support students' understanding of how to formulate mathematical models of real-world phenomena, including explaining assumptions and explaining why the model serves its purpose in a reasonable way?

APPLICATIONS: CRITERIA FOR MEETING THE RATING OF **"HIGH QUALITY/EXCITING"**		
	Materials *The materials show how to use mathematics to analyze problem situations appropriate for the grade level and provide examples of deploying the Standards for Mathematical Practice to make sense of problems.*	**Assignments** *The assignments prompt students to use mathematics and the mathematical practice standards to help them make sense of a variety of problems, appropriate for this grade level, by asking students to formulate mathematical models.*
Student	*Using high quality/exciting materials, my students will:* ■ apply the concepts and connect them to each other and their different representations. ■ make sense of the mathematics of the lesson/unit. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ understand how to formulate and model problem situations mathematically. ■ gain confidence that their effort to learn will pay off.	*Using high quality/exciting assignments, my students will:* ■ be challenged to use their mathematics to comprehend, analyze, and make sense of the problem situation. ■ make sense of quantities and their relationship in the math problem. ■ represent the problem concretely and pictorially and represent it as an equation and explain how the two representations relate to each other. ■ identify important quantities in a practical situation and map their relationships using such tools as concrete models, diagrams, and equations. ■ formulate and model problem situations mathematically. ■ engage in discussions with their peers and the teacher to make sense of the problem and learn from them. ■ be excited to try the problems and learn from working on them. ■ gain confidence that their effort to learn will pay off.
Teacher	*Using high quality/exciting materials will help me:* ■ see and understand the mathematical goal of the lesson/unit. ■ understand better the mathematics that I am teaching, learn more mathematics from the materials, and want to learn more from interacting with students. ■ be excited about teaching the lessons and see how students respond to the problems/tasks in the lesson/unit. ■ be confident I can focus students' efforts on the mathematical tasks/problems and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, missing connections, and which struggles will be most productive for students. ■ be confident students will be motivated to learn.	*Using high quality/exciting assignments will help me:* ■ prompt students to make their mathematical thinking clear in a way that others can understand and critique it. ■ want to learn more from interacting with students, analyzing their work on problems/tasks, and re-engaging them on making use of concepts related to them. ■ use the student's responses to focus their efforts on strategic thinking and give them feedback on generalizing to other related applications. ■ anticipate typical misconceptions, missing strategies, and which productive struggles will be most beneficial for students. ■ gain confidence that their efforts to learn will pay off.

RATING – Compared to the criteria listed above, the materials I have just reviewed would be considered:

☐ 3) High Quality/Exciting   ◯ 2) Good Quality   ◯ 1) Minimal Quality

FLUENCY

Materials:	**Assignments:**
■ How well do the materials focus on developing critical procedural skills and fluency for adding and subtracting within 5? 　● Materials show how procedural skills and the kindergarten standard for fluency work. Materials provide consistent opportunities for students to practice using the algorithm or procedure.	■ How well do the assignments focus on developing critical procedural skills and fluency? 　● The set of assignments prompts students to develop and demonstrate fluency by recalling with accuracy and reasonable speed addition and subtraction within 5.

FLUENCY: CRITERIA FOR MEETING THE RATING OF **"HIGH QUALITY/EXCITING"**		
	Materials *Materials show how the standard for fluency, adding and subtracting within 5, works and provide opportunities for students to practice using the algorithm or procedure.*	**Assignments** *The set of assignments prompts students to develop and demonstrate fluency by recalling with accuracy and reasonable speed addition and subtraction within 5.*
Student	Using high quality/exciting materials, my students will: ■ have a variety of different ways to practice using an algorithm, procedure, or formula to develop fluency. ■ self-assess areas of weakness and strengths in adding and subtracting to 5 and receive feedback on which area(s) to improve.	Using high quality/exciting assignments, my students will: ■ build skills in adding and subtracting to 5 flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately. ■ gain confidence that their efforts to learn will pay off.
Teacher	Using high quality/exciting materials will help me: ■ see and understand how the work on procedural fluency supports the mathematical goal of the lesson/unit. ■ be confident I can focus students' efforts on building fluency, and help students understand and correct their mistakes. ■ be confident students will be motivated to learn.	Using high quality/exciting assignments will help me: ■ want to learn more from interacting with students. ■ use students' responses to focus their efforts on building fluency and give them feedback on how to do better. ■ see how to help students understand and correct their mistakes. ■ be confident students will be motivated to learn.

RATING – Compared to the criteria listed above, the materials I have just reviewed would be considered:

☐ 3) High Quality/Exciting　　○ 2) Good Quality　　○ 1) Minimal Quality

APPENDIX C

Logic Model Sample

Example Theory of Change Logic Model for Improving Achievement Outcomes for Males of Color

ASSUMPTIONS

Program Implementation/Process/Activities—The research team assumes that processes and activities will change during implementation and the pilot *and* have varied impacts on project outputs and outcomes. As program elements and activities are implemented, researchers will identify specific expected outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes. This process will continue during the each stage of the project.

Outputs/Participation—Evaluators will monitor changes in outputs as a result of project processes and activities. We will also assess, to the extent possible, the relationship between changes in outputs and short- and intermediate-term outcomes.

Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes—Several outcomes will serve as annual measures of program success including, for example, PARCC and SBAC results, grade level performance, etc.

Critical Factors That Influence Student Achievement

Social Influences
- Peer-Peer Relationships
- **Parents/Community/ Religious Influences**
- Entertainment/Media
- Health/Medical Well-being

District Policies/ Leadership
- Hiring Practices
- Teacher Professional Development
  - Student Relationships/ Expectations
- Discipline/ Zero Tolerance Policies
- Support for students
- Support for principals
- Support for new teachers
- Community engagement policies

School Culture/Climate

Teachers/ Instructional Practices

Curriculum/ Academic Rigor

School Leadership/ Principal

District & School Process/Activities/ Support Systems

The proposed intervention will:
- Provide an adult advocate and a school-based resource for at-risk Black male students
- Develop a **curriculum** tailored to the lessons to promote Black male academic success (e.g. code switching, overcoming the stigma of failure or the appearance of low ability)
- Enhance **positive peer-to-peer interactions** to stimulate a **culture** of strong academic achievement within and across grade levels
- Increase access to, and participation in, advanced academic programs
- Provide strong student support services to students, teachers and principals for Black males
- Promote high academic expectations, school completion and college attendance through adult and peer mentoring relationships
- Build and expand community partnerships

Currently addressed by:
- Implementation of Common Core or College- and Career-Ready Standards
- Race to the Top Grants
- School Improvement Grants
- Teacher Effectiveness/Value-Added Measurement Research
- Focus on Lowest Performing Schools

These critical factors, while also important, are addressed through other grants and research projects

Outputs
- # of students participating in mentoring, counseling and/or tutoring programs**
- # of students enrolled in summer programs and institutes**
- Student attendance rates
- Discipline referrals (compared to baseline and non-participants)
- # of graduation coach instructional hours per student per year**
- # of community connections (# of meetings and # of student referrals)**
- # of parent/family conferences**
- # of teacher conferences/ support requests**

Outcomes

Short-Term (First Year/Annual)
- Annual number/percentage of students in the cohort working at or above grade level*
- Percentage of cohort enrolled in/completing pre-algebra or equivalent*
- Annual number/percentage of students being promoted on time*
- Average Scale Score and number/ percentage of proficient students* on state, PARCC or SBAC 7th, 8th, and EOC exams***

- Annual student feedback (focus groups, interviews or surveys) on the quality of interactions from mentoring, counseling, tutoring programs, and/or summer institutes
- Annual changes in student perceptions about school and academic ability
- Annual parent, teacher, principal perceptions of the quality of interactions with Graduation Coaches
- Changes in school culture and climate measured by surveys and teacher focus groups

Intermediate (Years 2-3)
- Number/percentage of students in the cohort completing*:
  - Algebra I in 8th grade
  - Algebra I in 9th grade
  - Pre-AP or AP course
- Number/Percentage of students meeting or exceeding the college-ready criterion on the ACT/SAT*
- Percentage of students taking the PSAT, ACT and SAT*

Long-Term (Years 4+)
These will NOT be measured with this project but will be monitored after project completion.
- Percentage of students in the cohort completing high school on time
- Number/percentage of students in the cohort enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall following high school graduation, in the spring after high school graduation, and a second year after high school graduation
- Average number of college applications
- Number/percentage of students in the cohort enrolled in college remediation courses (math and English)
- Number/percentage of students in the cohort enrolled retained in post-secondary education in the spring and one year

*Items marked with an asterisk (*) will be compared to project goals, historical performance, matched comparison groups from like students and schools, or the state average performance on these measures.

**Measures of the Fidelity of Implementation

***The research team will utilize state annual assessments as baseline control variables and as outcome measures if PARCC and SBAC assessment are not available.

Designed by: Ray Hart, Council of the Great City Schools

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APPENDIX D

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