



## **Equity, Relationships, and Learning: Opportunities for Family, School, and Community Engagement within the American Rescue Plan**

Family and community engagement has always been foundational for student learning and has become even more vital throughout the pandemic. A shared responsibility among families and educators, family and community engagement has been proven to increase school readiness, improve language, literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional skills, and increase the likelihood of high school graduation. For educators, family engagement leads to improved confidence and satisfaction with their careers. Family engagement is also associated with a more positive and welcoming school climate, and it brings about many benefits for families and communities themselves in terms of health and safety, emotional well-being, connection, and leadership.

The pandemic has shined a bright light on the importance of families in student learning, and as America builds its schools and communities back better and seeks to recover, states and districts have an obligation to continue to reach out to families, raise up their voices, expand how they support learning, and create relationships and connections. [The American Rescue Plan, H.R. 1319, 117th Cong. \(2021\) \(ARP\)](#) offers a variety of opportunities for states, districts, and schools to expand and enhance their family engagement strategies and practices and to make them more equitable for the long term. This document lays out some of these opportunities that we encourage LEAs to utilize and invest in. Opportunities for inclusion of family, school, and community engagement (FSCE) in State ARP/ESSER Plans is available in a separate document: [Guide to Family, School, and Community Engagement in State ARP/ESSER Applications](#).

---

### **WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST WITHIN THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN TO PROMOTE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?**

#### **Promoting Equity**

The pandemic has highlighted disparities and inequalities in our educational system and ARP provides opportunities for schools to address these inequalities:

- **§ 2001(b) Grants.** --From funds provided under subsection (a), the Secretary shall--use \$800,000,000 for the purposes of identifying homeless children and youth and providing homeless children and youth with--
  - wrap-around services in light of the challenges of COVID-19; and
  - assistance needed to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities; and
  - from the remaining amounts, make grants to each State educational agency in accordance with this section.
- **§ 2001(e)(2)(F) 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.*

- **§ 2001(e)(2)(M)** *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.*

### **Building Relationships with Families and Communities**

In order to retain and rebuild trust with families, ARP provides a variety of opportunities for schools to build their partnerships and collaborations with families in terms of communication and coordinated planning.

- **§ 2001(i)(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 funds described in paragraph (d)(1), a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.*
- **§ 2001(i)(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.*
- **§ 2001(e)(2)(E)** *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.*
- **§ 2001(e)(2)(G)** *Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies..*
- **2001(e)(2)(H)** *Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.*
- **§ 2001(e)(2)(Q)** *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.*

### **Focusing on Learning Both In and Out of School**

ARP provides unprecedented opportunities for schools to build partnerships that support learning both in and out of school, virtually and in-person, to build families' capacity to support and advocate for learning at home, at school, and in the community, and for schools to share academic progress with families.

- **§ 2001(e)(1)** *shall reserve not less than 20 percent of such 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 the student subgroups described in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(B)(xi)), students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care;*

- **§ 2001(e)(2)(J)** *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.*
  - **§ 2001(e)(2)(K)** *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.*
  - **§ 2001(e)(2)(N)**
    - *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. (specific fsce mention)*
  - **§7402(a)** *... to an eligible school or library, for the purchase during a COVID-19 emergency period of eligible equipment or advanced telecommunications and information services (or both), for use by--*
    - **(1)** *in the case of a school, students and staff of the school at locations that include locations other than the school...*
-



## **WHAT FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES MIGHT LEAs EMPLOY TO MEET ARP'S OBJECTIVES OF EQUITY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND LEARNING?**

### **Invest in Family Engagement Infrastructure**

- Hire staff whose specific role is family and community engagement (e.g., parent liaisons, coordinators, etc).
- Hire social workers who can connect with families and make referrals and community connections and provide counseling.
- Invest in data systems that allow schools to better track family needs, student attendance, and provide families with better access to real-time learning data, opportunities to understand the data, and make the data actionable.
- Invest in professional learning for all educators to understand families in their community contexts and needs they face.

### **Invest in Family Engagement Programs & Strategies**

- Create new systems and strategies to reach out to families. This can take the form of websites, home visits, community festivals, back to school orientations, transition events, parent academies, parent/family cafes, or partnerships with local businesses.
- Create opportunities to raise up family voice and interest through experiences such as surveys, design thinking opportunities, or focus groups.
- Create opportunities to enhance families' ability to support student learning, either through family literacy and math nights, STEM programming and workshops, or opportunities for sharing academic data (e.g., parent-teacher conferencing, academic parent teacher teams, etc).
- Create opportunities to connect students and families to one another to help reduce isolation and build communities back through events such as community dialogues, book circles, or service learning.
- Create robust partnerships with community learning spaces including afterschool programs, libraries, museums, religious institutions or other businesses for out-of-school and within school partnerships

### **Invest in Family Engagement Supplies & Resources:**

- Update digital resources (e.g., e-books, text books) as well as school-based learning materials.
- Create welcoming spaces that allow for social distancing and interaction.
- Provide technology access and guidance to families and educators.
- Provide translation and interpretation services for families to access relevant information.