

During the pandemic, some states and school districts were able to forge relationships with technology companies and nonprofits to ensure that students had access to digital devices and Wi-Fi. State and school districts also expanded partnerships with public health agencies and health and human services departments to ensure that families continued to have access to a range of supports, including mental health and housing. Many of these agencies are also receiving one-time federal aid. Blending and braiding these sources of one-time funding in a coordinated system of support for students and families has the potential to lead to long-term improvements in outcomes and to create greater efficiencies in resource use. Forming partnerships with community-based organizations and other trusted community service providers is another potential strategy for accelerating student learning and well-being by helping to identify and provide the learning and social-emotional well-being supports that students need. For example, LEAs can provide extended-day learning programs by developing partnerships with programs that operate outside school hours, and they can provide tutors by developing partnerships with local colleges and universities.

Investments in staff and infrastructure to develop these critical partnerships can help expand and extend the reach of the investments and their impact on student outcomes. Some states are considering investments in community school models that leverage partnerships as a central strategy for providing whole-child supports. Whole-child supports are more important than ever, as many students and families have increased needs due to the pandemic and had less access to whole-child supports while schools were employing distance learning. These partnerships rely both on strong relationships with students, families, and communities and on relationships with external partners from philanthropy,

nonprofits, and other government agencies. As part of this approach, education leaders may also want to consider investments in their capacity to communicate with families and communities. For example, they could provide additional translation services, translate more materials, make events more accessible for families, and provide more home visits and other types of family and community outreach.

Strategy 3: Modeling the Use of Funds — Including Ramping Up and Ramping Down

Another important strategy for state and district education leaders is to plan for the use of federal aid funds in phases, including planning for when the federal aid is gone. Modeling or projecting the use of funds over the next few years that the federal aid is available can help education leaders and stakeholders review investments in phases and then determine which investments to continue.

This strategy involves ramping up investments, likely in the 2021/22 school year, and then ramping down as the September 2025 deadline for the use of federal aid draws closer. In order to do so, states and districts need to plan for investments in phases based on the needs of students and the system as a whole. For example, some education leaders have predicted that costs may be higher for LEAs in fall 2021 because of the need to address students' emotional well-being, the need for comprehensive assessments of student needs, and additional facility costs such as ventilation upgrades and increased cleaning.

As district leaders engage with students, teachers, staff, and community stakeholders to determine priorities for the use of federal aid, they need to consider the time frame of the investments. Some investments will be truly one-time expenditures. Others, based on how successful

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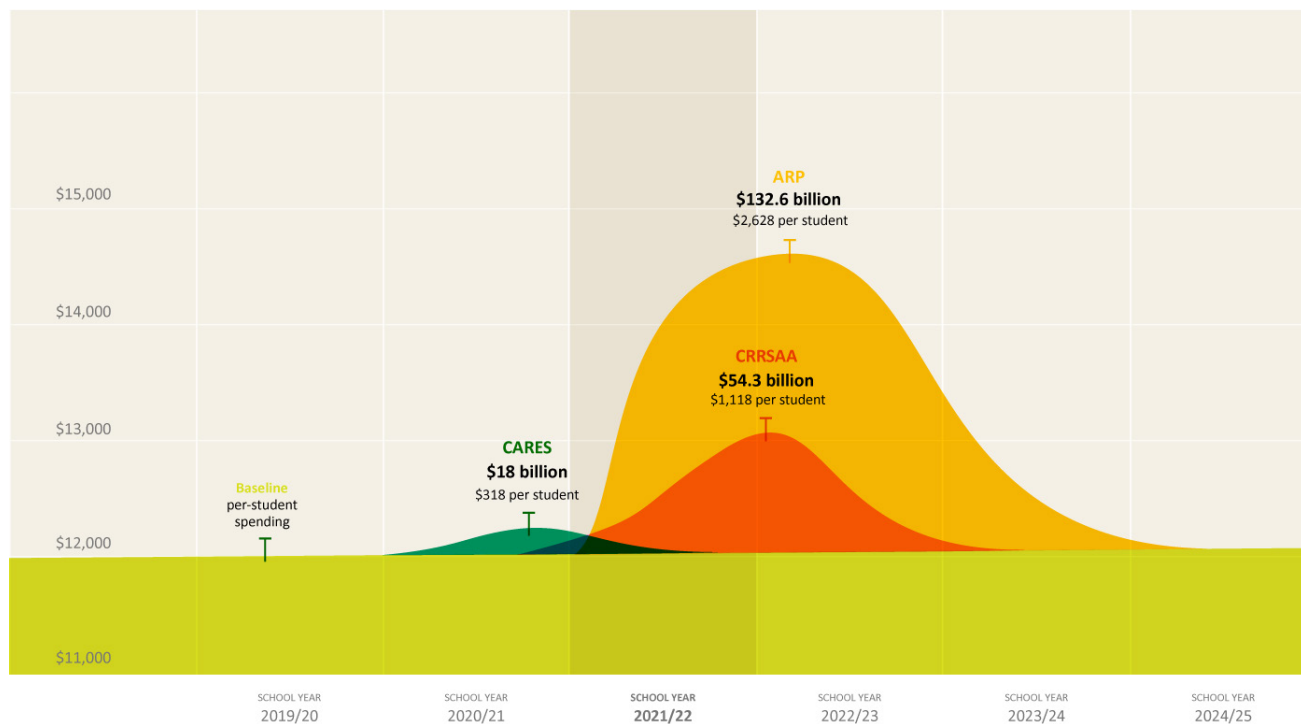
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they prove to be in improving outcomes for students, may have to be discontinued in either the short term or the long term. These projections should be transparent enough for public stakeholders to understand. Modeling investments over time, as well as outlining a strategy and timeline for monitoring whether new investments are having their intended impact, creates a roadmap for spending over the next few years. Projecting spending may also help state and district leaders avoid rushing into investments, spending large portions of funding on

programs that are untested in their systems, or waiting and rushing to spend federal aid at the end.

Figure 2 models how an LEA might ramp up and then ramp down per-pupil expenditures based on when the various sources of federal aid are available. Referencing the amounts and time frames associated with each funding source can help state and district leaders project the quantity of funds available to invest at any given time over the next several years. This information can then inform how best to ramp up and ramp down investments.

Figure 2: Per-Pupil Expenditures Based on the Availability of Federal Relief Aid



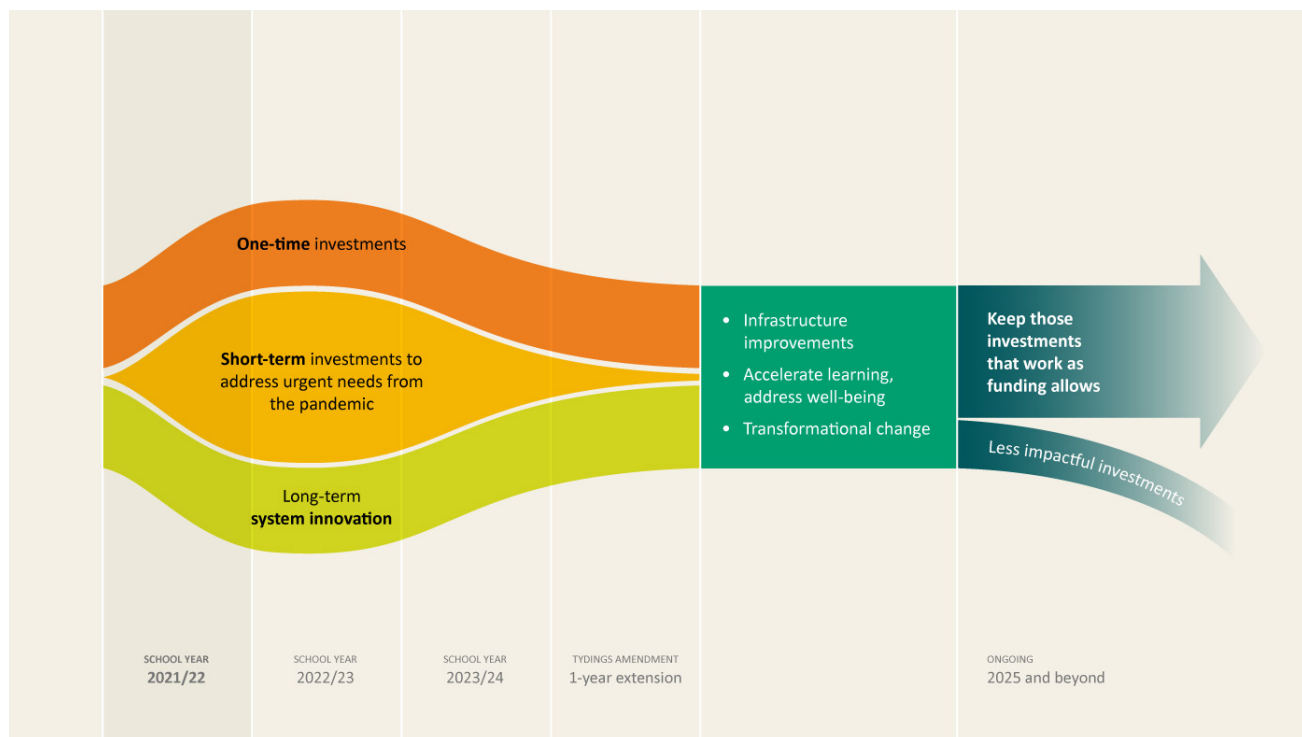
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Figure 3 visualizes how LEAs might model or project the use of different types of funding (Figure 1) from 2021 to 2025. One-time expenditures are likely to be made through the 2021/22 school year as immediate needs are identified. Short-term investments will likely ramp up in fall 2021 and then ramp down over a period of one or two school years. However, not all one-time and short-term investments need to be made during the 2021/22 school year. They can be scheduled

for various times later during the funding period. For example, some LEAs may choose to wait on some investments until after they have had an opportunity to assess student needs. Long-term investments may continue beyond the availability of federal aid if (1) they lead to improved student outcomes and (2) additional funding becomes available when federal aid is no longer available or staff attrition or budget cuts support the new investments.

Figure 3: Flow of Investment Priorities Using Federal Relief Aid



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Spending visualizations are useful not only for internal planning purposes, but also for communicating with stakeholders about state and district priorities for the use of federal aid, when they can expect the federal aid to end, and how the availability of the aid may impact new investments.

Conclusion

By carefully planning for sustained improvement in student outcomes, state and district leaders have the opportunity to invest one-time federal relief aid in ways that not only can meet immediate needs, but also can lead to transformational changes in education systems across the United States and have a lasting impact on students' opportunities for long-term success. As part of this effort, local education leaders can partner with stakeholders to communicate how investments of federal aid will lead to long-term systems improvement. In fact, communicating

and sharing strategies about local successes in leveraging federal aid to improve student outcomes will be critical to converting one-time federal aid into long-term investments in U.S. education systems.

As leaders plan how to use federal aid, it is important that they engage with stakeholders not only to discuss the value of each type of investment in improving student outcomes and yielding potential cost savings in the future, but also to create a common understanding of how long each investment could be sustained. Moreover, in addition to considering the needs of partnering stakeholders, state and local education leaders should ensure that students, families, and communities who are currently not well served by the system are engaged in the full range of decisions about resources, including how their needs can inform the most impactful solutions.

Endnotes

- 1 The American Rescue Plan (ARP), passed in March 2021, provided approximately \$125 billion to K–12 education; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), passed in December 2020, provided \$57 billion; and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), passed in March 2020, provided \$13.5 billion.
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- 4 State and local education agencies have until September 2022 to use their CARES Act funding, until September 2023 to use their CRRSAA funding, and until September 2024 to use their ARP funding. Notably, the Tydings Amendment (as incorporated in the General Education Provisions Act) allows state and local education agencies to carry over for one additional year any federal education funds that were not obligated in the period for which they were appropriated.
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