

# Public education advocates' position statement on the use of American Rescue Plan Act funds in New Jersey:



In February, our organizations issued a [statement](#) with recommendations on and goals for how we believe New Jersey's public schools can emerge from the COVID-19 global pandemic and ensure the immediate and long-term success of our state's students and educators.

With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) by Congress, an unprecedented level of direct federal funding is about to become available to almost every school district in the state, with additional funds controlled by the state government to help achieve the goals and objectives we laid out in our February statement.

An important and prominent provision in the ARPA requires that decisions about spending these funds be based on input from all stakeholders, including students, educators, parents/guardians and community members. Those stakeholders are to be included in the decision-making process in order to identify the most important priorities within the acceptable uses defined in the law.

## **We believe that the following minimum standards should apply to such stakeholder outreach:**

- Stakeholder input should be sought through as many platforms as are feasible in the context of the local community but should require real time discussions among participants, beginning immediately and with ongoing dialogue to ensure continued stakeholder engagement. Such discussions should follow existing public health rules to ensure participant health and safety.
- Stakeholders should be given authentic opportunities to contribute to the building of spending plans throughout all phases of plan development.
- Stakeholder input plans should be structured to begin with an identification of goals and priorities, not an immediate jump to spending plans.
- Local school districts (LEAs) should engage in broad efforts to ensure maximum diversity of input from all stakeholder groups and should include deliberate outreach and communication about the opportunities afforded by the extraordinary level of funding.
- Underserved communities, specifically communities of color, poverty and students with disabilities, should be given focused attention to ensure that their perspectives and voices are heard.
- To ensure accountability, there should be regular ongoing progress reports to the community and stakeholders regarding expenditures and the attainment of goals and objectives with opportunities for feedback.

ARPA funds should address the heightened need for tiered systems of student supports, particularly in communities where economic, social and racial equity issues exist. The historic level of funding provided by the ARPA provides significant funding needed to support all students, communities, and families. The broad range of allowable uses and the mandate for broad consensus of stakeholders can help build equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that meet the academic and social-emotional

needs of students. The added social-emotional needs of educators and families should also be addressed. Collaboration and shared leadership are necessary to accomplish this goal.

We continue to believe that federal funding must supplement, but not supplant, our state's obligation to fund our students and schools. Federal and state partnerships are critical to the work ahead, as are partnerships among our communities and organizations working to build effective, engaging, high quality schools throughout New Jersey.

In solidarity,



**American Federation of Teachers New Jersey**



**New Jersey Education Association**



**Arts Ed NJ**



**New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association**



**New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning**



**New Jersey School Boards Association**



**Education Law Center**



**New Jersey Parent Teacher Association**



**Garden State Coalition of Schools**



**Save Our Schools New Jersey**



**Latino Institute, Inc.**



**Tigris Solutions**



**NAACP New Jersey State Conference**



**New Jersey SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**



**New Jersey Association of School Administrators**



**New Jersey Work Environment Council**