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March 19, 2021 Edition

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More resources and training for teachers, school administrators, families and communities are on our [Learning Goes On website](#). See [Spanish-language version](#) of this edition.

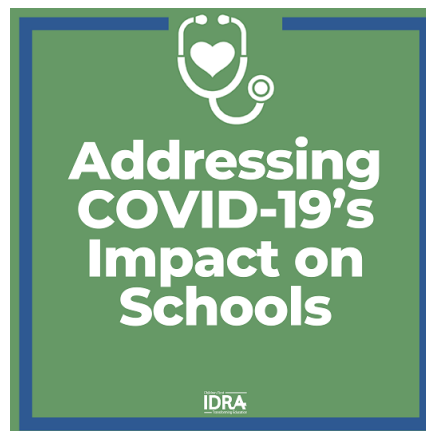
## Policy News

# Six Ways the New COVID Relief Plan will Impact Schools

Last week, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act, the third federal relief package designed to address major financial, health and education needs

caused and worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The law allocates almost \$130 billion to K-12 schools and approximately \$39 billion to colleges.

Below are six things to know about how that money will be distributed and spent.



**Through the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), state education agencies will receive about \$122 billion**, which is nearly twice the funding they received from the first two stimulus packages combined. Like the first packages, at least 90% of the funds distributed to state education agencies must then be allocated to local education agencies (school districts and many charter schools) based on Title I formulae, which target funds to districts based on poverty concentration levels.

No more than 10% of the funds can be used by the state education agency for other programs. All school districts and charters that receive funds must publish, within 30 days, a plan to reopen schools and ensure continuity of education. These plans must be open for public comment (unless a similar plan has already been produced by the district or charter).



School districts and charter schools that receive funding must use **at least 20% of the funds to address learning loss (or instruction disruption)**. This includes evidence-based strategies like summer learning opportunities, extended-day and extended-year programs, and afterschool programs. These funds must be used to support students' emotional, social and academic needs with a focus on students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. State education agencies also must use at least 5% of their ESSER funds to address learning loss.



**The remaining funds received by school districts and charter schools can be used for a wide range of purposes**, including the following:

- Providing mental health supports, including through community schools;
- Implementing any activity authorized by other major federal education laws, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA);

- Purchasing technology supports and devices;
- Implementing a valid and reliable assessment system to track student learning;
- Providing facilities upgrades and sanitation services in schools; and
- Providing information and assistance to families on how they can support their students while they learn virtually.



**Private schools will receive \$2.75 billion through the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools Program distributed by governors.** This program is different from the equitable services requirement that required public schools to provide services to private school students and was debated following the passage of the CARES Act.



**Colleges must use at least 50% of their funds to provide emergency financial aid grants directly to students** in a manner similar to the first emergency relief packages.



States and school districts that receive emergency relief funding **must adhere to “maintenance of effort” and “maintenance of equity” requirements.** Typically, recipients of federal funds must follow *maintenance of effort* provisions, which prohibit states from unnecessarily reducing their support for public schools as compared to previous years. With this new law, states must maintain their previous financial support of elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools (colleges and universities), including their funding of state need-based financial aid for postsecondary students, unless they receive a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education.

Additionally, states, school districts and charter schools that receive emergency relief funds must follow *maintenance of equity* provisions that are designed to ensure that any reductions in school funding due to revenue shortfalls do not disproportionately impact schools and districts with high concentrations of poverty. These provisions provide that, in 2022-23:

- States cannot reduce per-pupil funding in high-need school districts\* more than the average reduction for school districts across the state;
- States cannot reduce per-pupil funding for the highest-poverty school districts\*\* below the amount of per-pupil funding provided to those districts in fiscal year 2019; and

- Most school districts and charters cannot reduce per-pupil funding or staff in high-poverty schools\*\*\* in a manner that disproportionately impacts those schools compared to others in the district.

Other provisions of the Act will impact students and schools, including the expansion of COVID-19 vaccination and testing programs. The expansion of child tax credits, which will come in the form of monthly payments for qualifying families with children, could drastically reduce child poverty and improve outcomes for students and families across the country (Parolin, et al., 2021).

As with each COVID-19 relief package and all education resources, the monies from the American Rescue Plan Act will be most impactful if they are distributed, targeted and tracked in ways that promote equity and focus on historically-marginalized students, including students of color, emergent bilingual students, and students from families with limited incomes.

**The state must allocate the funds to school districts within 60 days of the state receiving them. It is crucial that community engagement plays a role in the process to decide how funds are used.** To stay involved and up-to-date on state policymaking processes and advocacy opportunities, follow IDRA on social media and sign up for our community engagement resources and advocacy updates Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network.



Follow us on Twitter, [@IDRAedu](https://twitter.com/IDRAedu), and follow IDRA's Education Policy Fellows, [@IDRAeduFellows](https://twitter.com/IDRAeduFellows).



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If you would like to be more involved in the education advocacy work IDRA is doing with students, families, teachers and others with lived expertise, [join Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network](https://www.idra.org/join-our-network).



Notes



\* According to the American Rescue Plan Act, high-need school districts are those that “(A) in rank order, have the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students in the state, on the basis of the most recent satisfactory data available from the U.S. Department of Commerce (or, for local education agencies for which no such data are available, such other data as the U.S. Secretary of Education determines are satisfactory); and (B) collectively serve not less than 50% of the state’s total enrollment of students served by all local educational agencies in the state.”

\*\* According to the American Rescue Plan Act, highest-poverty school districts include those that “(A) in rank order, have the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students in the state, on the basis of the most recent satisfactory data available from the U.S. Department of Commerce (or, for local educational agencies for which no such data are available, such other data as the U.S. Secretary of Education determines are satisfactory); and (B) collectively serve not less than 20% of the state’s total enrollment of students served by all local education agencies in the State.”

\*\*\* According to the American Rescue Plan Act, high-poverty schools are those 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...”

Parolin, Z., Collyer, S., Curran, M.A., & Wimer, C. (2021). [The Potential Poverty Reduction Effect of the American Rescue Plan](#), Poverty & Social Policy Fact Sheet. Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University.



## Upcoming Webinar

# Highlights for Creating a More Bilingual Texas

**March 31, 2021 • 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm cst**

Before COVID-19, schools in Texas struggled to prepare emergent bilingual students for college. Less than one in three (29%) graduates in the class of 2019 were deemed college-ready. And emergent bilingual students were more likely to experience chronic absenteeism with 24% missing three or more days of school. Already faced with a short teacher supply, emergent bilingual students must now navigate the complexities and hardships posed by campus closures.



In this webinar, Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes will outline six recommendations in our just-released report, [Creating a More Bilingual Texas – A Closer Look at](#)

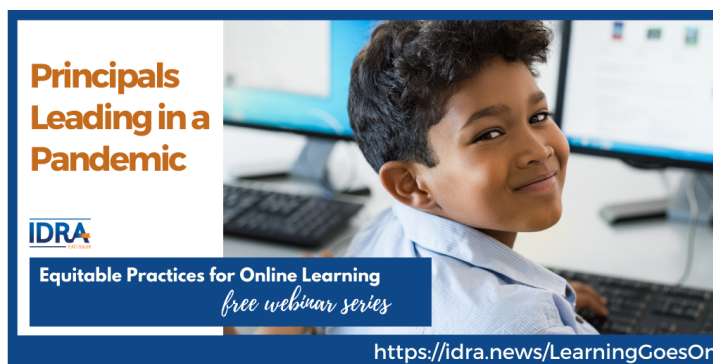
[Bilingual Education in the Lone Star State](#), that she co-authored with Chandra Kring Villanueva of Every Texan. The report provides an overview of policies, history and current issues for emergent bilingual students and bilingual/ESL education in Texas. It also shares recommendations to address the ongoing challenges to achieving educational equity for emergent bilingual students.

[Register Now!](#)

## Webinar Recording

### Principals Leading in a Pandemic

Educational leaders are juggling many priorities with the extraordinary challenges COVID-19 brought for principals and all campus administrators. This webinar will explore lessons learned during the pandemic on how to provide thoughtful and effective leadership.



Principals Dr. Timothy Vaughn from Edgewood ISD and Rawan Hammoudeh from San Antonio ISD joined Dr. Nilka Avilés of IDRA to discuss the competencies they have used in finding solutions to the challenges and concerns during this pandemic.

[Get details and watch now!](#)

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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.