

How much ARP funding can be invested in postsecondary pathways?

As districts and states work to invest forward, we urge a deliberate focus on putting students on a path to economic mobility in high school. Students, families, and communities consistently report that supporting students to successfully access postsecondary education and succeed in future career pathways are among the most important goals of high school. Yet, amidst the competing priorities in K-12 school systems, investments in the structures and systems to support students' postsecondary pathways are often overlooked. These investments are a down payment on students' futures.

Districts and states should invest significant stimulus resources to shore up support for students in grades 9-12, accelerate postsecondary and career preparation, and ensure more equitable postsecondary access.

As districts and states develop their investment plans, there are a few potential ways to determine how much of that investment goes to pathways-related strategies.

Anchored to Enrollment

Students in high school have suffered tremendously as a result of the pandemic, with many reporting having to cancel or significantly alter their plans for postsecondary education and training. District and state leaders can consider setting a target investment percentage on pathways-related strategies based on the percentage of students currently enrolled in grades 9-12. For instance, in one large, urban Midwestern district, high school students account for 32% of district enrollment.

Anchored to Strategic Plan

It will be critical that districts and states take their current strategic plans as a foundation for determining stimulus investments. As such, leaders can consider setting a target investment percentage tied to the community's strategic plan priorities. For instance, if 1 out of 5 strategic plan priorities are focused on postsecondary access and success, the district could aim to use 20% of its stimulus funds to support that work.

Anchored to Federal Spending

District and state leaders could look to federal support of postsecondary pathways as the floor for investment. Taken together, federal investment through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) plus funding to support access to advanced courses, train counselors, and other elements of Title I account for at least 10% of total education spending. Thus, districts could target 10% of their ARP funding for strategies to support high school students on their paths to long-term success.

Regardless of approach, every district and state should be transparent about what percentage of ARP stimulus dollars is used to support postsecondary pathways.