

How can we ensure a return on investment for stimulus funds?

The opportunity to improve postsecondary pathways presented by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) is one we cannot afford to waste. Leaders must make strategic investments to ensure that their funds have maximum impact. The following are a recommended set of measures to track and report to demonstrate a clear return on investment for the district and state ARP funds. Improvement on each is highly predictive of increasing students' long-term success. Based on [research](#) from leading districts and states, prioritizing these measures can improve postsecondary access and success, especially for students of color and low-income students.



Build college and career momentum early in high school

Intended outcome: Increase % of 9th grade students on-track to graduation

Students on track freshman year are 3x more likely to graduate high school and those with a 3.0+ GPA are significantly more likely to attain a postsecondary credential.

Intended outcome: Increase % of high school students that receive college and career advising during the school day

School-based postsecondary advising models have led to significant increases in postsecondary enrollment and persistence, especially among students of color and low-income students.



Acquire knowledge, experiences, and relationships necessary for career success

Intended outcome: Increase % of students that complete a high-quality career pathway program aligned with in-demand labor market opportunities that pay a family-sustaining wage

Students that complete a high-quality pathway—particularly male and low-income students—are more likely to graduate from high school, attend a postsecondary institution and receive higher compensation after high school.

Intended outcome: Increase % of students that complete a pathway-aligned work-based learning experience

Students who participate in work-based learning in high school experienced higher postsecondary GPAs and demonstrate better employment outcomes.

Continued on next page



Acquire knowledge, experiences, and relationships necessary for career success (continued)

Intended outcome: Increase % of students with relationships that facilitate their transitions to postsecondary and career success

A close knit web of strong relationships is critical to helping students thrive. Within K-12 and postsecondary pathways, students report unequal or limited access to developmental relationships, mentors, and professional connections, all of which have been found to provide considerable value to postsecondary enrollment and success.



Earn college credit and/or stackable credentials before graduation

Intended outcome: Increase % of students earning college credit

Student participation in early postsecondary opportunities increases high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and persistence.

Intended outcome: Increase % of students earning an industry-recognized credential

Students that earn industry-recognized credential in high school are more likely to enroll in postsecondary and demonstrate better employment outcomes.



Directly enroll in postsecondary education or training programs that lead to credentials with labor market value

Intended outcome: Increase % of students applying to postsecondary education or training program

Students that submit 2+ college applications are 40% more likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution than their peers.

Intended outcome: Increase % of students completing FAFSA

Approximately 90% of students who complete the FAFSA enroll in a postsecondary institution directly after high school, compared to 55 percent of non-completers.

Intended outcome: Increase % of students who enroll in college or an apprenticeship program or enlist in the military immediately after graduation

Students who continue their education or training directly after high school graduation are more likely to persist and attain a credential.