



# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

## Overview & Priorities

Through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) is eligible for more than \$108 million in federal funding to help support our students, staff and school community over the next three years.

Of the total amount allocated to the SCSD from the State's ARPA award, the District must reserve at least 20 percent of funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups. The SCSD ARPA Plan allocates more than 50% of the funds for academic initiatives and more than 20% on Social-Emotional and mental health well-being initiatives.

Most of this funding will be used to address student learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including initiatives and activities to support students in their core subject areas. Funding will also support academic intervention, family engagement, student support services and other academic and social-emotional needs. To ensure that our schools are safe and healthy places for students to learn, a portion of funds will support our facilities and maintenance, including air filtration systems; as well as technology support to ensure that all students have access to the technology necessary to help them achieve their best. A remaining portion of funding will support professional development, which will ensure a personalized and rigorous instructional program which creates equitable and accessible opportunities for all students

## FUNDING PRIORITIES



### Learning

To accelerate student learning, we will provide initiatives and supports to help students in core subject areas, as well as to enhance and support Special Education, English Language Learner (ELL), and virtual students. The District will provide a variety of program offerings and platforms of learning, designed to meet students where they are, and help close the achievement gap that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Social-Emotional

To meet the needs of the whole child, we will provide the resources and supports necessary to help identify student mental health and social well-being needs and support them on the path to success.



### Air Quality & Safety

We will invest in air purifiers, window replacements, flooring replacements, HVAC controls, and other mechanisms to ensure that our schools remain safe and healthy places for students to learn.



### Technology

We will ensure that all students have access to the platforms they need to succeed in school by distributing laptops and hotspots to eliminate the digital divide.



### Professional Development

To help our teachers and staff become the most skilled and knowledgeable, we will invest in professional development and training to enable them to create rigorous and equitable opportunities for all students.



## LEARNING

# \$55.2 MILLION

### Math Intensive

#### \$20.7 Million

In order to support the acceleration of learning in mathematics for students who may have experienced interrupted teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the District is implementing a Tier 3 intervention program. This program will provide teachers and teaching assistants with appropriate training on effective mathematics instruction. Our goal is to ensure that teachers are well-trained to minimize the amount of time a student needs Tier 3 instruction, allowing us to identify clear goals for students and help them build concepts and skills at a more accelerated pace.

In addition, the District will implement a similar intensive **Math Support program K-12**, which includes the addition of 53 positions for instructional support (31 TA's, 2 Coaches, 19 AIS Teachers) and repurposing 5 existing positions as Math AIS Teachers and tutors. We will offer additional professional development for Math intervention staff and will purchase several new digital content and software programs for Math Labs; as well as new Math Manipulatives, new Fluency Kits and content-specific grade level intervention supplies.

### Reading Intensive

#### \$11.7 million

To help identify and address gaps in reading skills, the District will implement a Multi-Tiered system of reading supports to ensure student success in grade level curriculum and assessments, ultimately increasing the likelihood of later school success for students. This system will include evidence-based curriculum and instruction at all levels; universal screening of all students; evidence-based, instructional interventions at targeted (Tier 2) and intensive (Tier 3) levels provided to each student who needs them; progress monitoring for learners who are achieving below expectations; and data-based decision-making throughout the system. This large-scale process includes numerous steps to support a more culturally responsive curriculum, including the creation of an Inclusion Team, a diverse group of leaders to help guide the way we select curriculum.

In addition, the **Early Literacy initiative**, that since its inception has shown progress, will receive additional funding, allowing the addition of 18 instructional support positions, tutoring, supplies and new Independent Reading Classroom Libraries for grades K-5.

### Summer School

#### \$12.1 million

To help fill the achievement gap exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the District offered Full-Day Extended Summer School in 2021, including both in-person and virtual summer school classes. In summer 2021, two weeks were added to summer school, providing more time on task. Afternoon enrichment programs were offered for grades K-8. High school 11th and 12th graders had an opportunity to attend classes on the Onondaga Community College campus, providing them with college exposure and experience. The District plans to continue offering more robust summer school offerings in the coming years, as ARPA funding is available.

### Virtual Academy

#### \$7.7 million

In response to students and families who have thrived and want to stay in remote learning, the District plans to open a Virtual Academy to students who have completed middle school. These secondary school students who prefer to learn remotely, need access to courses not offered in their home school, and/or need a virtual credit recovery option not available in their home school, will be offered the Virtual Academy option expected to open in September 2022. This Virtual Academy will use personalized learning plans to allow for a truly personalized learning experience. Teachers will work together in teams to ensure each student meets and exceeds academic and personal goals and requirements. The Virtual Academy will include a full support team including teachers, Library Media Specialist, ENL teachers, Special Education teachers, counselors, instructional coaches, and tutors.

### Other

#### \$2.9 million

#### Special Education

Students with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the school interruptions caused by COVID-19. Funding will allow the District to make facility renovations to add sensory rooms, add additional teachers and teaching assistants, order sensory building supplies, add a sensory room and playground at McCarthy at Beard, and expand special

class offerings at the high school level. Additionally, funding will allow the District to support students over the age of 21 who may be in need of recovery, as the New York State Education Department is allowing overage students whose programming and services were unable to be completed due to COVID, stay an additional year in high school.

**English as a New Language (ELL) Literacy**

Funding will allow the District to support progress monitoring in language and literacy development, including purchasing resources to support personalized learning, development of reading skills, vocabulary acquisition and language skills fluency.

**Social Studies and Civic Engagement**

Funding will allow the District to accelerate learning in social studies and civic engagement. It will restore funding for classroom supplies reduced in recent years, allowing teachers to access additional classroom materials; and will also provide the opportunity for students to experience field trips to the Onondaga Historical Association for an enrichment museum studies project, a new African American history trip to Washington DC, new 3rd grade field experience to Strong Museum in Rochester and restoration local field trips including Law of Peace Center and the Erie Canal, among others. Such field trips and experiences allow students to practice speaking and listening skills that are necessary for college, career and civic life thus focusing on clear and concrete disciplinary literacy skills as aligned to the New York State Social Studies Framework and NY Next Generation Literacy Standards.

**Project-Based Learning and Advanced Placement**

Project-based learning, a method of exposing students to interdisciplinary concepts by taking ownership over their own learning, is a particularly effective way to engage students actively. Research indicates increased achievement outcomes through this method of instruction. Advanced Placement (AP) coursework prepares high school students for the rigors of postsecondary work. The combination of project-based learning and AP coursework has shown to be incredibly effective, particularly for students of color and student from low-income households. Funding will allow the District to expand AP course options in high school, as well as project-based learning across grades Pre-K-12, allowing the District to enhance students’ preparedness for high school and postsecondary work by offering multidisciplinary, hands-on instruction combined with rigorous curriculum.

 **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**

**\$24.5 MILLION**

As we prepare to enter the 2021-2022 school year and beyond, we cannot ignore our students’ most basic individual needs, which include social-emotional learning, mental health well-being, and the need for inclusive programming. Funding will enable the continuation and expansion of several social-emotional learning and culturally responsive practices programs throughout the District.

**Attendance Initiatives**

**\$2.3 million**

Chronic absenteeism is a major hurdle that can be mitigated by providing focused support to SCSD families. Students involved in focused outreach efforts are easier to engage or reengage in the learning process, adding to the likelihood of increasing retention and graduation rates, particularly if the need for outreach is immediately identified. Research suggests impacting chronic attendance issues as early as elementary school can increase student’s academic success throughout their academic career.

To help get kids back to school and build strong relationship with families to increase engagement, the District will hire 17 additional Program Aides in the Office of Family Engagement (one for each school). We will also implement a “Check and Connect” model of reducing absenteeism, which utilizes mentors or liaisons to monitor students’ progress and work alongside families to improve attendance. Funding will also enable the District to pay for additional staff to perform outreach after school hours during the entire year.

**Social-Emotional Learning  
Culturally Responsive Education Training**

**\$1.1 million**

The District will offer extensive professional development on Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Education protocols for instructional staff, leaders, student support staff and others.

### Staffing

**\$12.8 million**

The District has developed a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) which is an evidence-based approach to comprehensive program delivery that addresses academic and behavioral challenges that can impede learning. At the center of the MTSS are school counselors, social workers and psychologists. To support students and families, this funding will allow us to expand our Student Support Services Department, which currently employs more than 250 individuals – including Psychologists, Psychologist Interns, Counselors, Social Workers and Social Work Assistants.

### Contract Services

**\$3.5 million**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequities that hold many students back, with school closures proving especially disruptive for children from lower-income families, who are disproportionately likely to receive mental health services exclusively from schools. ARPA funding will allow the District to partner with community agencies and groups, working together through a collaborative and comprehensive approach to have the most positive impact on the academic and wellness outcomes of our students. These partnerships will assist in identifying students needing the most intensive support, and will help students and families with services such as health care, housing and food assistance as well as counseling and crisis intervention.

### Resources

**\$4.8 million**

To support student mental health and social-emotional wellbeing, the District will purchase and utilize culturally appropriate books and materials and will provide space for students, staff and families to gather. This funding will enable the District to purchase textbooks, materials, tools, book studies, and resources to provide Peace Corners and to enhance availability in libraries and family engagement spaces. Our goal is that these culturally relevant materials will help students promote empathy and unity; promote cross-cultural friendships; help students look critically at the world; and will help encourage identity formation.



## AIR QUALITY & SAFETY

**\$13.2 MILLION**

To ensure that schools are safe and healthy places for students to learn, funding will be used for air purifiers and filters; HVAC controls; window replacements and security. While air purifiers are already present in classrooms, the District will add more air purifiers to small spaces, such as guidance, social worker and other support service offices, where staff meet and the District will purchase larger air purifiers for large spaces like gymnasiums, auditoriums, cafeterias, and libraries. We will also replace windows at Franklin, Meachem, Montessori at LeMoyne, Salem Hyde, and Van Duyn schools; and replace carpet in 200 classrooms at several schools across the District with a floor tile material. This funding will also support HVAC upgrades for 15 buildings and the NOC Network Operations Center.



## TECHNOLOGY

**\$12.6 MILLION**

As part of an initiative to ensure that each high school student has access to a digital device, the District will purchase additional laptop computers and hotspot devices for all incoming freshmen for the next three years while ARPA funding is available.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

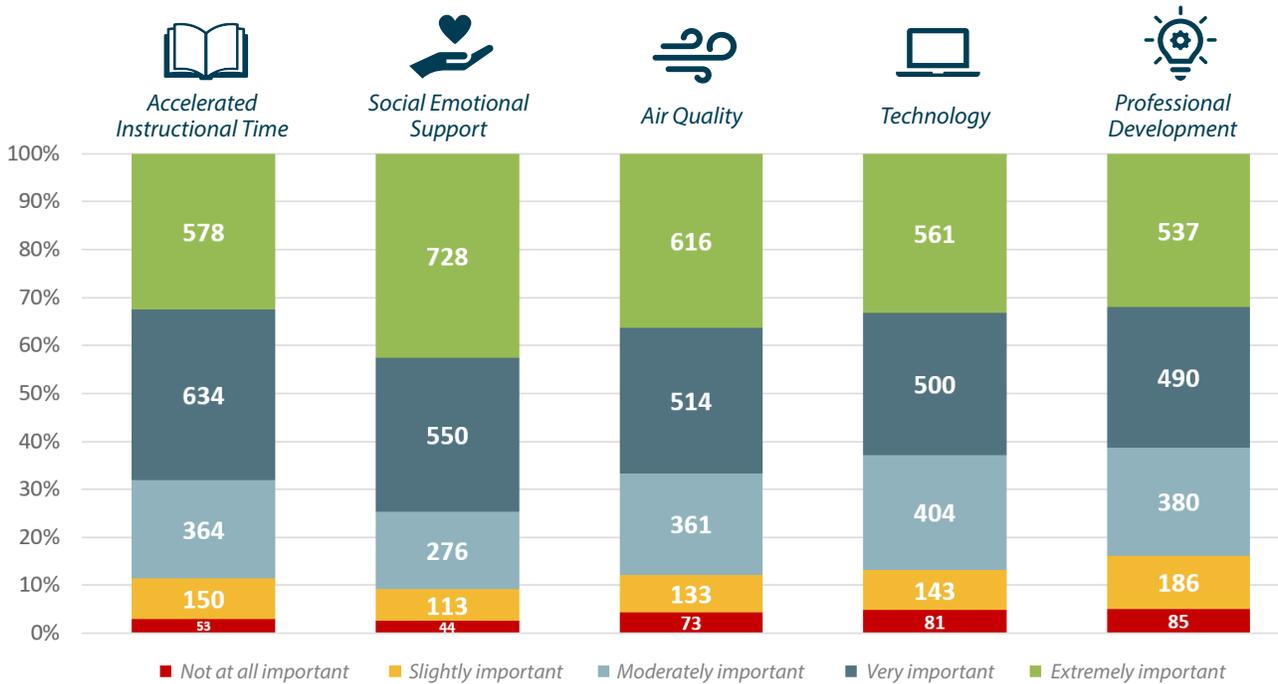
**\$3.5 MILLION**

To improve the quality and effectiveness of curriculum writing, the District will partner with Buck Institute for Project Based Learning Works. We will also partner with agencies such as Hill Pedagogies, Instructional Coaching Group, and College Board to improve the quality and effectiveness of both school leaders and instructional staff. This funding will also support ongoing paid professional development to instructional coaches to lead professional development sessions, as well as support the addition of five new Technology Integration Specialists to assist staff with the use of technology and software.

**IN CONCLUSION**

A requirement of ARPA is to gather public input on the proposed use of ARPA funding and to incorporate this input into the final plan. The District surveyed the community collecting over 1,700 submissions affirming the five Strategic Areas of our plan with over 60% of all responses agreeing that these areas are very or extremely important. In the comments section of the survey many of the recommendations are being addressed with the District General Operating Funds or with the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) 2-year funding and other grants. The most prevailing responses that were added to the SCSD ARPA Plan include enhanced tutoring and mentoring opportunities for students which are now included in the Virtual Academy; math and reading intensive programs; and collaboration with local colleges and universities via our AVID program.

**Overall Survey Responses**



We pledge to invest the ARPA funds in a responsible, equitable manner to serve all Syracuse City School District children. It is our belief that by investing these short-term federal funds to provide intensive academic support and an all hands-on-deck approach to Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health well-being, that staff and students will be Stronger Together.