

# How Can States and Districts Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically?

## Supporting the Educator Pipeline

The [Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act \(CRRSAA\)](#), enacted in December 2020, and the [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#), enacted in March 2021, provide states and local educational agencies (LEAs) with \$176.3 billion through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund ([ESSER II](#) and [ESSER III](#)). These laws provide [great flexibility](#) for both states and LEAs (including districts) in the use of funds. LEA funds can be spent on any educational expense allowed under

- the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),
- the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),
- the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and
- other specific allowable uses ([Section 313\(c\)–\(d\)](#); [Section 2001\(d\)–\(e\)](#)).

ARPA requires that 20% of LEA funds and 5% of state funds be allocated to address learning recovery and that states must also set aside 1% of funds each for after-school programming and summer enrichment, while CRRSAA added funding to the [Governors' Emergency Education Relief \(GEER\)](#) program, targeted to COVID-19 responses including [LEA activities authorized under ESSER](#). States and LEAs have until [September 30, 2023](#), and [September 30, 2024](#), to obligate CRRSAA and ARPA funds, respectively, and at least 120 days after those deadlines to spend the funds. States and districts have the opportunity to use CRRSAA and ARPA funds not only to meet short-term needs but also to make longer-term investments to close opportunity and achievement gaps.

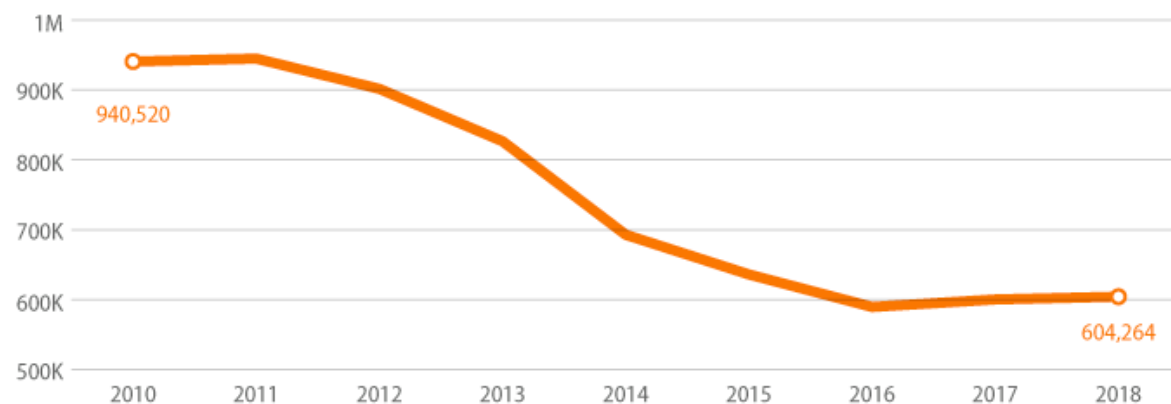
### Investments in the Educator Workforce Address Urgent and Long-Term Student Needs

Teacher shortages were widespread even before the pandemic, with more than [100,000 positions](#) left vacant or staffed by underqualified individuals in 2017–18 alone. COVID-19-related burnout and workloads have raised [concerns](#) about increased turnover, and in the [2020–21 school year](#) more than 40 states reported shortages of teachers in high-need areas, such as math, science, and special education. All this comes on top of a long decline in annual enrollment in educator preparation programs (EPPs), which has fallen by [more than 30%](#) over the past decade (see [Figure 1](#)), largely due to concerns about cost, [student loan debt](#), and the [lack of competitive compensation](#) for teachers.

Not only are many teaching positions filled by underprepared and inexperienced educators, but these educators are disproportionately concentrated in schools with higher percentages of the nation's **most underserved students**: students from low-income families and **students of color**. These long-lasting inequities in educator preparation and experience are **substantially responsible** for persistent and pervasive opportunity gaps. Meanwhile, over the course of the pandemic, teacher **shortages** have only deepened, potentially exacerbating these systemic issues.

## Figure 1 Declines in Teacher Preparation Program Enrollment

Enrollment by year, 2010–18



Source: Author's calculations based on U.S. Department of Education, "Title II Reports," available at <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx> (last accessed October 2019).

Source: Partelow, L. (2019). *What to make of declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/12/03/477311/make-declining-enrollment-teacher-preparation-programs/>. This figure was originally published by the Center for American Progress.

## Federal Recovery Funds Can Support Comprehensive Educator Preparation

Strong educator preparation is critically important to support improved teacher **effectiveness** and **retention** and improved student **achievement**. State and LEA investments in comprehensive educator preparation are allowable through multiple routes.

### Teacher residencies

Recovery funds can be used to create and support teacher **residency** programs consistent with **allowable uses through ESEA**. High-quality **residencies** are characterized by features such as district–university partnerships, candidate financial support, and yearlong comprehensive clinical experiences tightly linked to coursework. **Research** suggests that residencies produce effective educators who **stay in teaching** at higher rates and who are, on average, more **racially diverse** than new teachers prepared through other routes, an important feature given the growing research base on the **benefits** of a racially and linguistically diverse workforce.

Under ESEA, residency programs must offer at least a year of preservice training, including instruction in subject-area content and in pedagogy. Funding can be directed to new or existing programs. Current residency [programs](#)—including those described in state [ESEA plans](#)—can serve as models for new investments.

### **Grow Your Own programs**

Another application of recovery funding comes through the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act [allowable use](#) for high school teacher career pathways, a type of Grow Your Own (GYO) model focused on long-term [workforce development](#) and [diversification](#). Examples of such programs with records of promising results include the [Recruiting Washington Teachers](#) program and the [South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program](#). A wider range of GYO program types can be funded under [ESEA allowable uses](#), including routes that provide paraeducators, other school staff, community members, and career changers with training and support to earn teacher certification.

### **Preparation for special education teachers**

Shortages in special education teachers are among the most acute and long-standing nationwide. Through IDEA, LEAs can use [ESSER and GEER](#) funds to support preparation and professional development specifically for special education teachers. Also among allowable uses of funds in [IDEA](#) are investments to establish or improve preparation partnerships between districts and EPPs and to create routes for paraprofessionals to become special education teachers, another variation on the GYO model.

## **Strategic Investments Can Support Learning Recovery and Educator Preparation**

The ARPA funds allocated to learning recovery can also support [partnerships](#) with educator preparation programs. [Teacher candidates](#), as well as recent EPP graduates who missed out on in-person clinical experiences during the pandemic, can fill a variety of roles in learning recovery programs: serving as tutors in [high-quality tutoring programs](#), staffing [summer programs](#) and [after-school](#) or [expanded learning](#) programs, or working as [paraprofessionals](#) or [substitute teachers](#) in co-teaching or resident roles. Such an approach to staffing provides multiple benefits: Districts can draw on these candidates and graduates to meet staffing needs and strengthen learning recovery programs, teacher candidates can cover preparation costs through paid clinical experiences, and candidates and recent graduates can gain useful in-person experience.

## Examples of Federal Relief Funding Investments in Educator Preparation

In Maryland, [Towson University](#), a member of the [EdPrepLab](#) network, has been running a GEER-funded [tutoring program](#) since fall 2020 in which teacher candidates, prepared and supervised by faculty members in the College of Education, provide free, online tutoring to k-12 students across the state while gaining unique clinical experience.

**Minnesota** has designated \$5 million in GEER funds to institutions of higher education, including targeted [support for teacher candidates and EPP faculty](#) that prioritizes members of underserved communities. Allowable uses of this funding include mentorship programs, [direct grants](#) for teacher candidates, and funding for EPPs and EPP–district partnerships.

**Tennessee** used \$2 million in state educational agency ESSER funds for a [GYO competitive grant program](#) supporting a variety of [pathways](#) for high school seniors, education assistants, and teachers to earn credentials in STEM fields and special education, among others.

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This fact sheet can be found online at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/federal-funds-EdPrep-factsheet>.

For more information, contact Steve Wojcikiewicz, Senior Researcher and Policy Advisor, [swojcikiewicz@learningpolicyinstitute.org](mailto:swojcikiewicz@learningpolicyinstitute.org).

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