Under the American Recovery Plan (ARP), more money—$126 billion—will be in the coffers of local education agencies than previous stimulus plans, alongside more guidance for how local school systems and states should use stimulus dollars (see inset, ARP Funding: Rules of the Road). While locals will often be the final decision-makers on how ARP dollars are used, states have an opportunity to shape K–12 education by advancing guidelines for how schools use funds and launching their own initiatives using discretionary funds.

A scan across New England states reveals some examples of how they can shape education with stimulus dollars:

- **Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont** have established state requirements to guide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in using their ARP dollars. Vermont additionally required that LEAs meet with state support teams and submit their plans to the State Education Agency.

- **Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts** have announced plans to invest State Education Agency set-aside and discretionary dollars toward K–12, with a focus on career readiness initiatives.

**New Hampshire** has provided support for how LEAs can meet federal requirements in using their ARP dollars, but has not established additional guidance. Nor has the state announced how it will invest state funds into education initiatives. Even among the states that do provide guidance or launch statewide initiatives, it remains to be seen whether school systems and families find benefit from such support.

### ARP Funding: Rules of the Road

**States now have increased flexibility over how general ARP dollars can be used.**

Unlike previous stimulus packages, districts must use 20 percent of local ARP dollars, or ESSER III grants, to “measure and address the academic impact of lost instructional time” and ensure that interventions are both effective and meet the needs of students most impacted by the pandemic. Districts must publish a plan for how funds will be used and revise the plan every six months until September 2023.

The federal government provides more structure for State Education Agencies’ (SEA) use of ARP dollars. All SEAs were required to submit a plan in June 2021 responding to prompts related to state education priorities, LEA support, and stakeholder engagement. The federal government also provides more structure for how SEAs should use their 9.5 percent set-aside. SEAs are required to use at least 5 percent of the set-aside on the academic impact of lost learning time, and at least 1 percent each for summer enrichment and afterschool programs.

Under ARP, states no longer have Governor Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) funds for public education investments. However, they have increased flexibility over how general ARP dollars can be used, so they could use ARP for education under one of the four priority areas: “addressing systemic economic challenges,” which we see being used for K–12 career readiness initiatives in Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts.

**Source notes:** Researcher review on June 16, 2021, of State Education Agency and Governor websites using key terms “American Recovery Plan,” “ESSER,” “COVID,” and “reopening.”
Four of six New England states have established state guidelines, on top of federal requirements, to shape how LEAs use ARP dollars.

Under ARP, the federal government requires school systems to publish a plan for how they will use their funds. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont have clearly communicated state requirements for how ARP funds should be used locally or how states should plan for the next school year.

**Connecticut:** The Connecticut State Department of Education is extending the five priority areas it established for the use of ESSER I and II funds, which include academic support and family and community connection. Connecticut’s Department of Education published detailed guidance for districts, and provides specific, actionable examples for meeting each priority area, alongside state and national resources. LEAs had until the end of May to identify ways that the Department can better support them in their planning.

**Massachusetts:** The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided several guidance documents to help districts plan for the fall and use their stimulus funds. This includes a plan template, budgeting guidance, and a list of evidence-based programs to support academic learning, social-emotional well-being, and talent development. The Department is also offering office hours to support district planning.

**Rhode Island:** The Rhode Island Department of Education convened a Learning Equity and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) task force to identify how the state should use ARP funds. The task force identified five priorities, including improved student transitions across grades and systems. The priorities will be codified in district Recovery Plans and will guide actions for the Department of Education, LEAs, and community-based organizations.

**Vermont:** In March, the Department of Education provided detailed guidance for district planning, with a template that requires districts to address three domains: social-emotional learning, engagement and truancy, and academic achievement. The state offers recommended actions across these three domains. Districts were required to meet with state support teams during the planning phase, and all plans had to be submitted to the state by June 1.

### Three states have announced how they are investing discretionary ARP funds for education.

Governors in Connecticut and Massachusetts have communicated robust plans for using ARP funds to support academic acceleration, social-emotional well-being, career preparation, and/or college readiness using the SEA set-aside and ARP discretionary funds.

**Connecticut:** Connecticut is dedicating $11 million to increase summer enrichment opportunities and $15 million to allow youth free access to state museums this summer. Additionally, an unspecified amount will be used for a home visit program to re-engage youth in 15 districts. The state is using discretionary ARP funds for **career and college readiness** by investing $3.7 million to increase hours at career and technical education centers, $2 million to provide employment opportunities to disengaged youth, and an unspecified amount to offer 30,000 high school seniors with FAFSA support.

**Maine:** The state has announced plans to use an unspecified amount of discretionary ARP dollars to fund five district Career and Technical Education Centers.

**Massachusetts:** Governor Charlie Baker is investing $25 million toward helping school districts launch Acceleration Academies, and an additional $10 million for early literacy tutoring grants to districts over the summer and next school year. $3.5 million in discretionary ARP dollars will increase the number of career pathways in vocational schools and high schools. An additional $2 million in stimulus funds will increase access to advanced course content to support youth’s transition to college.

For more, visit crpe.org