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Spring 3-2021

## Centering Values: Building an Equitable Future through the American Rescue Plan Act

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### Recommended Citation

Sharrock, E., Lawrence, B. J., DeMoss, K., & Brennan, B. (2021). Centering Values: Building an Equitable Future through the American Rescue Plan Act. Bank Street College of Education. Retrieved from <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/bsec/6>

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*Imagine what would happen if everyone—regardless of race, income, or opportunity—had consistent access to learning experiences deeply informed by an understanding of human development.*

The \$1.9-trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) offers incredible opportunities to support American children, youth, families, and educators after a difficult year, which they endured with remarkable resilience and creativity. It represents a powerful, positive change in how our country values and supports human development and learning, with a clear focus on equity. The act constitutes a significant change in our nation's approach to social policy. Together, its components including housing support and the child tax credit are predicted to cut poverty by one-third and reduce child poverty by more than half.<sup>1</sup> This provides a measure of stability long needed for those that create the basic fabric of our society—including many caregivers and teachers. When combined with new investments that prepare educators to provide enriching, human-centered learning experiences, this foundational shift offers new hope and possibility for the nation to deliver on its promise of equity and opportunity.

It is through authentic engagement with children, youth, families, and educators that the right specific strategies for each community can be devised. Bank Street offers two possibilities for spending we hope will inspire communities and policymakers as they think broadly about the potential outcomes of funding decisions to invest in our future.

## 1. Prioritize compensation and training for the infant and toddler workforce

The \$39-billion dollars in direct child care relief is an opportunity to make long overdue investments in high-quality professional learning for the infant/toddler workforce, tied to increases in compensation. While two-thirds of the country's youngest children spend their day in the care of someone other than a parent, less than 10 percent of child care arrangements offer high-quality care.<sup>2</sup> Infant/toddler educators receive little training and are paid so poorly that nearly one-half of them depend on public assistance.<sup>3</sup>

The relief funds can address this through the following strategies:

- **Build or expand *apprenticeship* programs to attract and retain infant/toddler educators while deepening expertise and raising program quality.** States can make good use of the one-time funding opportunity offered through the stabilization grants to build the infrastructure for an apprenticeship program and finance its first candidates. This effectively builds the supply of child care providers and offers a pathway to attract new educators to the field.<sup>4</sup> Apprenticeship programs can also serve existing educators to stem the tide of turnover in the field, which is nearly 50 percent for lead teachers.<sup>5,6</sup> These investments work together to meet immediate needs as the industry recovers from the pandemic and, importantly, lay the foundation for a sustainable teacher pipeline centered on practice-based learning to improve the quality of care.
- **Prioritize spending across funding streams to increase compensation for child care providers through short-term relief and pilot the structural changes needed to sustain these increases.** Wage supplements, like premium pay used to recognize essential workers, should be immediately prioritized with the spending of stabilization funding. While they only provide short-term relief, they begin to demonstrate a commitment to

*“These investments work together to meet immediate needs as the industry recovers from the pandemic and, importantly, lay the foundation for a sustainable teacher pipeline centered on practice-based learning.”*

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increasing the wages of child care providers and can help reduce the extraordinary number of child care providers leaving the field. Short-term measures like those initiatives started by some states during the pandemic, such as funding by enrollment not attendance, should also be pursued as strategies that continue to pave the way for more sustainable structures for child care funding that guarantee certain funding capacity. At the same time, states should pilot and demonstrate more **sustainable structures for ongoing increases in compensation**, like grant-funded or contracted funding models using relief funds. Pilots can be targeted to high-needs areas, including infant/toddler care, settings that serve low-income families, and/or child care deserts. The ARPA includes a small permanent increase in funding that could be the basis for these investments.<sup>7</sup> This provides states with time and experience to plan for larger structural changes in the allocation of child care resources through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and to consider a better balance of vouchers and contracted/grant funding models long term.

## **2. Embrace the opportunity to remodel the P-20 educational system by integrating teacher preparation with P-12 student learning opportunities**

In pockets all over the nation, educators are demonstrating that working together across higher education and P-12 schools can strengthen outcomes for students while also providing a stronger, more diverse pool of new teachers for schools and districts. By tightly coupling supported clinical practices in teacher preparation with learning priorities inside P-12 schools, these partnerships are able to align resources from across both systems to the benefit of all.

The unprecedented infusion of federal funding to states and districts—over \$120 billion—can accelerate these kinds of transformative collaborative efforts, which will, in turn, address immediate critical needs that have surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic and set the stage for long-term integration of a P-20 system.

- **Invest in teacher residencies to provide embedded, aligned instructional support to enhance student learning.** When aspiring teachers co-teach alongside a more experienced classroom teacher over the course of an entire school year before being fully certified—a model often called a “residency”—they bring with them a foundational knowledge of human development that contributes to student learning. In classrooms with residents, students reap the benefits of a reduced student-teacher ratio and the opportunity for more individualized instruction throughout the school day. In addition to addressing teacher shortages, which COVID-19 has exacerbated, evidence exists that residency models contribute to increased student learning inside their classrooms, which can reduce the need for remediation and supplemental instructional programs.<sup>8</sup> But few people can afford to work for a year for free; residents need funds to live. P-20 partnerships and state education agencies (SEAs) can design in ways that allow for sustainable funding of stipends for these aspiring educators:
  - *Align program design with sustainable funding streams.* ARPA permits local educational agencies (LEAs) to spend up to 80 percent of funds—almost \$90 billion—on any activity allowed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Through close partnership between programs and districts, residencies can be designed to align with the goals of each of these pieces of legislation,<sup>9</sup> and partnerships can rely on these funds after the influx of resources authorized by ARPA expire.
  - *Provide necessary flexibilities through the adoption of a Residency Certificate.* SEAs can offer a Residency Certificate that enables qualified candidates who have not yet completed their teacher preparation experiences to take on enhanced instructional responsibilities inside schools and facilitates their compensation for such work.<sup>10</sup>

- **Incorporate future educators from across the teacher recruitment pipeline into supplemental educational opportunities—with support—to maximize benefits for students and grow commitment to the teaching profession.** Partnerships that have not yet initiated a residency program, as well as those that want to broaden the linkages between teacher preparation and K-12 learning even further, have additional opportunities under ARPA. LEAs are required to spend 20 percent of their new funding (\$22 billion) and SEAs are required to spend another \$8.5 billion on supplemental instructional activities, including summer learning and enrichment, after-school programs, and extended day and year programs. ARPA also increases the funding available for AmeriCorps, opening up the opportunity to send countless tutors into schools with support from this key service program. Residents can fill needs in each of these areas, but states and LEAs can also partner with teacher preparation programs to create a system that integrates committed individuals from across the teacher recruitment pool—secondary students in grow your own programs, college students enrolled in or considering education majors, career changers interested in pursuing teaching—into these roles. As with well-designed residencies, linking these supplemental instructional roles with purposefully designed and supported program experiences should offer stronger results.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, providing these future teachers with meaningful instructional experiences will foster their own learning and better prepare them to enter the profession. Compensating them for their efforts will further enhance their development as educators, allowing individuals to focus their energies in clinical practice work rather than in jobs unrelated to their desired career path.

We have an immediate opportunity in this moment to open our collective minds to new possibilities. If we work collaboratively with children, youth, families, and educators to allocate new resources with careful intention, the American Rescue Plan Act can serve as a catalyst for reimagining education. At the same time, there are urgent, immediate needs to which we must attend. A healing-centered approach is especially crucial now, given widespread experiences of stress and trauma in the wake of the pandemic. Investments in professional learning and direct mental health support across our systems and communities are essential to ensure that educators and caregivers have the skills and resources to meet these needs and manage their own experiences of trauma at the same time.<sup>12</sup> As plans are devised and resources allocated, we commit to elevating the experiences of children, youth, families, and educators as we work together to understand the ways in which new investments advance our goals for equity.

To read more about related recommendations on early care and education, visit [bankstreet.edu/birth-to-three](https://bankstreet.edu/birth-to-three). To read more about sustainably funded, equitably accessible, high-quality teacher preparation, visit [bankstreet.edu/prepared-to-teach](https://bankstreet.edu/prepared-to-teach).

*“Students reap the benefits of a reduced student-teacher ratio and the opportunity for more individualized instruction throughout the school day.”*

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Wheaton, L., Minton, S., Giannarelli, L., & Dwyer, K. (2021). 2021 Poverty Projections: Assessing Four American Rescue Plan Policies. Urban Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103794/2021-poverty-projections-assessing-four-american-rescue-plan-policies\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103794/2021-poverty-projections-assessing-four-american-rescue-plan-policies_0_0.pdf)
- 2 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2006). The NiCHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. Retrieved from [https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/documents/ seccyd\\_06.pdf](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/documents/ seccyd_06.pdf).
- 3 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Power to the Profession Decision Cycles 3,4,5+6 Discussion Draft 2. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/initiatives/profession/ decision-cycles/power-profession-decision-cycles-3456>
- 4 Of the \$24 billion stabilization funds, 10 percent is earmarked for administrative activities, including efforts that build the supply of child care.
- 5 The additional allocation of \$15 billion to the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) can be used to extend the apprenticeship program to existing educators.
- 6 Bassok, D., Markowitz, A., & Bellows, L. (2021). New Evidence on Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373720985340>
- 7 In addition to the \$15 billion to the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) the ARP includes an increase of more than \$600 million in mandatory CCDBG funds over the regular annual appropriation.
- 8 Yun, C. & DeMoss, K. (2020). Sustainable Strategies for Funding Teacher Residencies: Lessons From California. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/29Y0Abq>; Bacharach, N., Heck, T. W., & Dahlberg, K. (2010). Changing the face of student teaching through coteaching. *Action in Teacher Education*, 32(1), 3–14.
- 9 The Sustainable Funding Project. ESSA & Quality Teacher Preparation: Strengthening Instructional Effectiveness & Supporting School Improvement. (2016). New York, NY: Bank Street College of Education. Retrieved from [https://educate.bankstreet.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=faculty-staff&\\_ga=2.245832322.785011655.1616090609-1295631100.1614109966](https://educate.bankstreet.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=faculty-staff&_ga=2.245832322.785011655.1616090609-1295631100.1614109966)
- 10 See Appendix 3 of Making Teacher Preparation Policy Work: Lessons from and for New York for an example Residency Certificate proposal.
- 11 Edgerton, A.K. (January 2021). The Importance of Getting Tutoring Right. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-getting-tutoring-right>
- 12 Both the \$123 billion in K-12 COVID relief funds and the \$24 billion in child care stabilization funds allow for spending on mental health supports.