



How Should Indiana Schools Use Funds from the American Rescue Plan?

By Educator Barnes – March 30, 2021

The American Rescue Plan will provide nearly 123 billion in stimulus funds for K-12 schools. The funds will be divided between state education agencies (10%) and local education agencies (90%). Indiana has been allocated \$1,994,734,056. How should Indiana schools use these funds?

With any type of funding from the government, there is always some guidance about how funds should be used. School districts must use at least 20% of the funding to address learning loss. The pandemic impacted education, and students did not learn as much as they should have. Also, this was the case in some schools before the pandemic occurred which means those students are drastically behind in their learning. Schools should use this funding to address those gaps and should probably use more than the 20% minimum.

Currently, my sons are doing math tutoring which my husband and I are paying for with our own funds. We have noticed gaps in our sons' learning, and it would be nice if these funds could be used to address not only the gaps my sons have but the gaps that all students have. Tutoring, summer enrichment, and academic intervention plans should be part of where this money is invested. Furthermore, these plans need to be rooted in research-based practices. Our students are already behind, so there is no time to lose on practices that show no evidence of working.

Another area where funds should be spent is on technology and technology professional development. One-to-one devices for students should not end when the pandemic ends. Students in wealthier school districts typically already had their own devices to use for their education. Many students in impoverished districts just now received this access. It would be cruel for students to lose access to technology.

Also, teachers need professional development for best practices for using one-to-one devices in the classroom setting. Teachers have been learning while they are trying to teach, and this has not been effective for students. There are best practices for using technology, and if schools are going to invest funds in these devices, they must also invest funds to ensure teachers know how to use them appropriately to help students learn.

Last, funding should be used for wraparound services that provide supports to families for struggles they may have due to the pandemic. These services should also include mental health. Living through a pandemic has impacted all of us. I assert that mental wellness services should be available to staff, parents, and students.

The decision school districts make should ultimately be rooted in what is best for kids.