

TIP SHEET: Responding to ARP ESSER Myths



The Engage Every Student Initiative was created by the U.S. Department of Education to provide high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities for every child who wants to participate.

As you connect with your local and state offices and districts to make the case for using their American Rescue Plan (ARP) resources to partner with afterschool and summer learning programs, you may encounter some myths about how funds can be used. Below are sample responses and resources to help you navigate the myths and misconceptions and keep the conversation going.

MYTH: LEAs can't use ARP resources to fund out-of-school-time programs. That's not an allowable use.

Through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III, ARP provides funds to state and local education agencies to support students and learning recovery through afterschool and summer programs. State and local agencies, including school districts, are investing their ARP dollars in partnerships to expand or launch new summer and afterschool programs.

According to the law, local school districts must spend at least 20% of their ARP funds on learning recovery strategies, which include comprehensive afterschool and summer enrichment or learning programs. In addition, state education agencies must allocate: 1% for comprehensive afterschool programs; 1% for summer enrichment; and 5% for learning recovery strategies, which include comprehensive afterschool and summer enrichment or learning programs.

Here's a short handout that defines [comprehensive afterschool](#).

To help states with their plans and offer guidance to both state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs), the DOE recently released a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) document](#) that provides more than 60 pages of guidance on a number of allowable uses for the ARP ESSER funding. Among the questions addressed are several on allowable uses of school districts' funds. On page 12 of the FAQ, in a question relating to whether school districts can award part of their ESSER funds to community-based organizations through contracts or agreements, the answer says "an LEA may provide services directly or enter into an agreement (e.g., a contract or interagency agreement...for allowable activities under ESSER." On page 11, in a question related to whether these contracts can be entered into with afterschool and summer learning programs in particular, the same FAQ states the following is one of the activities an LEA may support with ESSER funds:





“Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and enrichment and supplemental after-school programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.” (#15)

Additional clarification is available on page 13 of the [FAQ](#).

MYTH: We can only use our ARP resources for tutoring.

Academic interventions like tutoring and acceleration, while serving a role, may be less effective if offered on their own and not as part of a comprehensive program that includes enrichment and engaging activities sought out by students.

Research shows that students perform better academically when they have supports for [social-emotional learning](#) and behavioral growth. Students also succeed when educators [partner closely with families](#) in learning. Afterschool and summer programs are specifically designed to do these things, while partnering with teachers to offer tailored academic supports, such as one-on-one tutoring, that individual students need.

Find more resources on this topic at:

<http://afterschoolalliance.org/covid/accessing-funds-LEAs.cfm>

MYTH: The ARP resources are too time-limited. We don't want to fund and expand something only to have to take it away when the funding expires. Afterschool and summer learning programs are an evidence-based strategy that have proven results. With the support of state afterschool networks and national partners, afterschool and summer programs can implement continuous improvement strategies that can help them ensure their programs are meeting the needs of children and families and contributing to positive outcomes.

While the time-limited nature of ARP funding can be a challenge, it is important to consider the students currently attending school and the wide range of support they can immediately benefit from, both during and after the school day for the three years these funds are available.

Furthermore, [a wide range of local, state, and federal funds](#) can be tapped into to sustain these programs after the ARP fund obligation deadline.

MYTH: No, afterschool and summer programs aren't consistent across our state and community. We'd rather use the money on something we can directly control.

A [recent poll shows](#) 8 in 10 voters agree that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for their community and more than 3 in 4 voters agree that local governments and schools should invest some of their COVID-19-relief funds into afterschool and summer programs. Programs often have deep ties in the community and are connected to local schools to reflect the unique learning needs of our students. While the programs across the state may look different, the goal is the same-to support kids' academic growth and well-being.