



# Using American Rescue Plan Funds and Other Federal Resources to Address Teacher Shortages

The pandemic exacerbated existing teacher shortages and created new ones with many teachers leaving the profession due to burnout, stress, and low pay. But the federal, state, and local governments have stepped up, leveraging funding and implementing evidence-based strategies and innovative approaches.

## The Challenges

According to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 68 percent of principals surveyed are concerned about teacher shortages and report it has been more difficult to hire qualified teachers since COVID-19. Also, the EdWeek Research Center survey released in October shows that nearly half of principals and district administrators said they are struggling to hire enough full time teachers.

Shortages have been most pronounced in special education, bilingual education, and STEM areas and in schools that predominantly serve students from low-income backgrounds. In essence, the students who need the most support may have even less access to the specialized instruction they need. Shortages can lead to larger class sizes, school closures, unnecessary shifts to virtual instruction, hiring unqualified teachers, and teachers covering classes during their allotted planning and development time.

Three Seattle area school districts canceled classes one recent Friday due to substitute and staff shortages. Those districts are not unique. Los Angeles Unified, California's largest district with 600,000 students, had more than 500 teacher vacancies, leaving 500 classrooms without a permanent teacher. One smaller district north of Detroit had 43 vacancies—one quarter of its teaching staff.

## Evidence-Based Strategies to Ease the Shortage

A three-pronged approach may help alleviate the educator shortage in the short term, and it should be paired with long-term strategies that will lead to a more robust educator pipeline.

### Short-Term Strategies to Ease the Shortage



#### 1. Provide targeted incentives

Provide retention bonuses, loan forgiveness, and service scholarships.



#### 2. Build and maintain a cadre of high-quality substitute teachers

Provide increased daily pay or stipends, establish a resident substitute program so the same substitute teachers serve the same schools, and remove barriers for retired teachers to substitute.



#### 3. Improve working conditions

Support teacher well-being and mental health, create leader-to-educator and peer-to-peer supports systems, provide additional support staff and planning time, communicate resources available to teachers. Hire AmeriCorps members to serve as tutors and assist with administrative responsibilities (federal funds can be used to meet AmeriCorps matching requirements to support these efforts).

### Long-Term Strategies to Ease the Shortage



#### 1. Increase wages

A recent IES study found that 18 percent of all public school teachers have a second job outside the school system during the school year.



#### 2. Invest in the educator pipeline

Loan forgiveness and service scholarship programs can support access to comprehensive pathways into the profession. These programs also encourage newly certified teachers to teach in high-need areas and commit to serving a certain number of years. High-quality teacher residency programs have also been shown to increase teacher retention and effectiveness.



## Use of American Rescue Plan (ARP) Dollars

The American Rescue Plan includes funding for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) and the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program, both of which can be leveraged by states to address the teacher shortage.

Below are a few ways that SLFRF can be used to help schools address shortages:

- 1. Rehiring public sector workers up to pre-pandemic levels:** SLFRF may be used for payroll, covered benefits, and other costs associated with rehiring public sector staff to pre-pandemic levels.
- 2. Providing assistance to disproportionately impacted schools:** Recipients can use the funding for populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The services may include providing services to districts with high rates of poverty; evidence-based educational services; practices that address the social, emotional, and academic needs of students; and new, enhanced, or expanded early learning services.

## Key Examples of States with Creative Approaches to Solving the Teacher Shortage

- The Indiana DOE will launch a program to provide more than \$2.5 million using ARP ESSER and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B funds, to help teachers earn teaching licenses.
- California's West Contra Costa County Unified School District offers \$6,000 signing bonuses for teachers. A third of the bonus is paid after a teacher's first month in the classroom; the remainder at the beginning of year three.
- Indianapolis Public Schools has reached an agreement with its teachers' union for a 3 percent pay raise this year and an additional 3 percent in 2022-23.
- North Carolina offers a \$33,000 scholarship for STEM/special education teachers, with an 8-year service commitment or 4-year commitment if at a low-performing school.
- The San Diego Unified School District signed an agreement with the union to create a "Resident Visiting Teacher" position at every school. This means a teacher is always on standby in case of unexpected circumstances. The district raised the pay to \$285/day (compared to the regular substitute teacher rate of \$170/day).
- The Colorado Substitute Stipend program encourages qualified individuals to apply for a substitute teaching certificate. It offers a \$300 bonus for obtaining a license, undergoing training, and working a minimum of one day.
- Nevada's Carson City Schools allows rehiring retired teachers to fill special education vacancies.
- Kentucky passed legislation to temporarily allow retired teachers to be rehired and keep their pensions to help with teacher shortages, and increased ten-fold the percentage of retired teachers who can be rehired by a district.



For more information on SLFRF, visit the Treasury's state and local website at [www.treasury.gov/SLFRF](http://www.treasury.gov/SLFRF). For more information on coronavirus-related relief for retirement plans, visit the Internal Revenue Service website at [www.irs.gov/newsroom/coronavirus-related-relief-for-retirement-plans-and-iras-questions-and-answers](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/coronavirus-related-relief-for-retirement-plans-and-iras-questions-and-answers). For more information on the use of Americorps funds, please see [americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Leveraging-National-Service-in-Your-Schools.pdf](http://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/Leveraging-National-Service-in-Your-Schools.pdf).