



## WHY EDUCATIONAL FUNDING IS MORE THAN SCHOOL FUNDING



Education leaders and advocates are being inundated with recommendations on how states and school districts should spend federal funding provided through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the other two federal relief acts. Understandably, these recommendations focus on spending in schools, such as instructional technology, tutoring, social-emotional learning, summer programs, and school-to-family engagement. But this focus presents a classic problem in how we think about children's opportunity gaps: the Silo Problem.

As educators will tell us, children's lives themselves are not siloed. What happens outside school can profoundly impact learning. Students experiencing food and housing insecurity do not have those obstacles magically disappear when they walk through the schoolhouse doors. Why, then, are relief act recommendations for educational leaders siloed—why are they not intertwined with sectors outside of the immediate education system, such as housing, transportation, and healthcare? Why are school-focused policymakers not building bridges to create what the Schott Foundation calls [Loving Cities](#)?

The need to address outside-of-school factors is implied within a recent [publication](#) from the U.S. Department of Education that outlines ways to use ARP funding, in which the Department recommends districts and schools devise solutions to gaps in transportation, nutrition, and childcare. But the Department appears to place this burden entirely on districts and schools.

A more across-the-board, non-siloed, approach is described by the [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#), which outlines ways that recovery legislation can be used to advance racial equity. The report sets forth a vision that draws on multiple sectors receiving federal support, including housing, early education, food assistance, and support for low-wage workers and healthcare while eliminating discrimination. Such comprehensive views provide a pic-

ture of what is possible if multiple sectors align in reducing racialized poverty.

In California, for instance, children are currently experiencing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Several interconnected efforts aim to lift children up using multiple levers. Full-service community schools, in particular, are a systemic intervention to meet children's outside-of-school needs, and California is quickly becoming a national leader in [community school reform](#). The state's Local Control Funding Formula and recent [investment in school-based mental health services](#) should be thought of as part of—or closely connected to—those community school efforts.

Additionally, California's education system has received approximately \$23.3 billion in [federal relief funding](#). These temporary funds are providing school leaders with a unique opportunity alongside unusual time restraints. Another crucial part of the context involves the non-education elements of the relief funding. As explained by the [California Budget and Policy Center](#) (in relation to ARP, the largest of the three relief acts), the K-12 education assistance is only 10 percent of the overall (\$150 billion) relief provided to California. Through these other federal funds, California children can benefit from health and housing assistance, from the expanded child tax credit, and from local initiatives—among other possibilities. In fact, research is already showing a substantial drop in [hunger](#) and [child poverty](#). The \$23.3 billion in federal school funding to California is critical but so too are the ways that the more than \$150 billion in federal funds (the amount from just the ARP) will support the same children and youth who attend California's schools.

### NEPC Resources on School Finance and Funding

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