

**ANALYSIS BRIEF:**

**Exploring How New York School Districts Plans to Address Learning Loss Leverage Afterschool, Summer, and Other Expanded Learning Opportunities**

**APRIL 2023**



**I. INTRODUCTION**

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law, infusing almost \$2 trillion in the American economy. The law made available \$122.8 billion nationally for public education into a third round of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP-ESSER) funds. New York received about \$9 billion of these funds, with about 25 percent (\$2.2 billion) made available to address learning loss by leveraging evidence-based interventions such as afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities. These funds provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine education by prioritizing strategies that mitigate barriers to students' learning and strengthening the infrastructure for effective, integrated supports that help improve students' academic outcomes. This brief analyzes available data on school district plans submitted to the New York State Education Department, outlining how school districts intended to utilize learning loss grants provided through ARP funding. The brief summarizes the frequency of and total funding allocations to different types of interventions school districts named in their plans to address learning loss, and the prevalence of school-community partnerships.

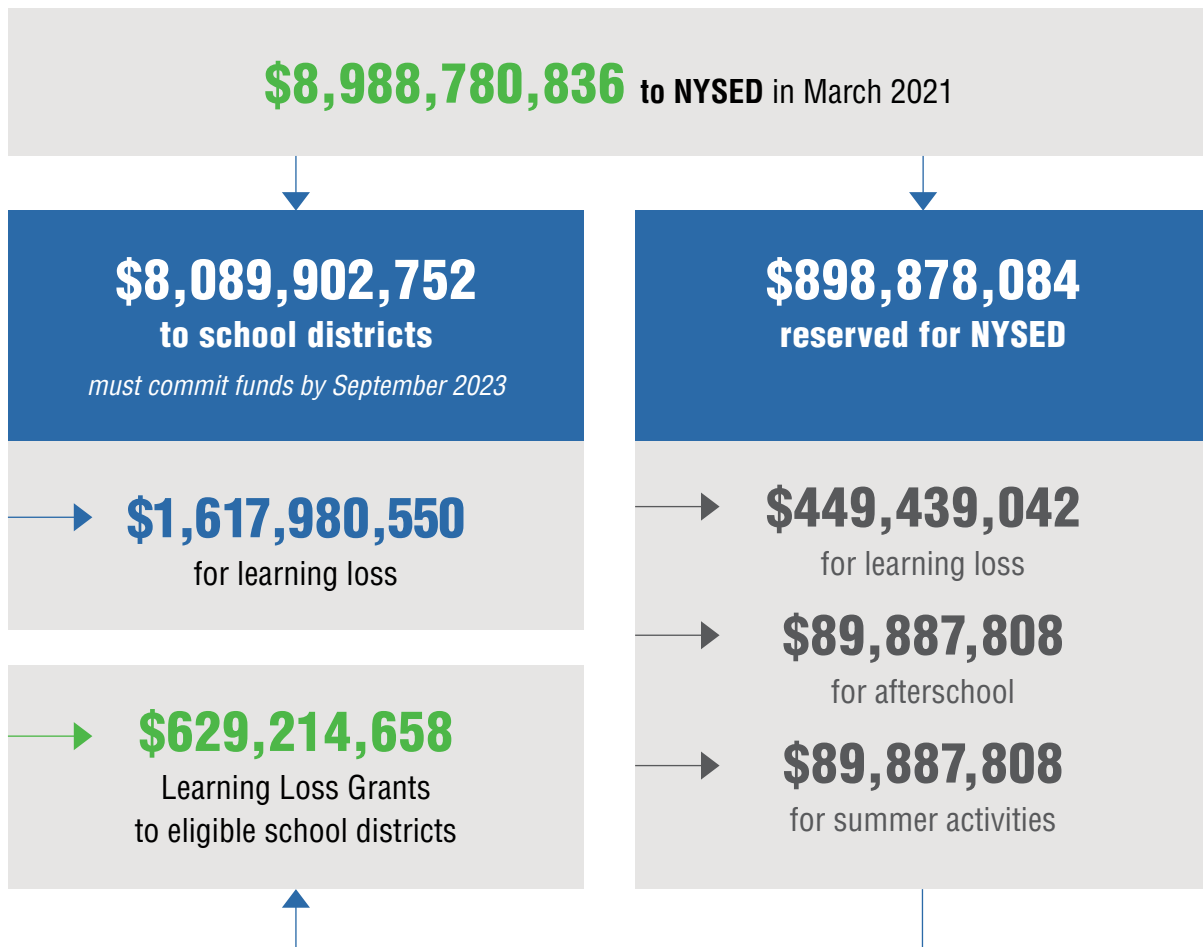
## II. BACKGROUND OF AFTERSCHOOL IN NEW YORK

Afterschool programs play a vital role in the development and education of K-12 students. These programs keep children safe, support working families, and increase academic achievement. Of all New York students participating in an afterschool programs,

- 78% report building life skills,
- 86% get help with homework
- 84% engage in STEM or computer science learning opportunities,
- 83% take part in physical activities,
- 72% receive healthy snacks or meals, and
- 86% interact with peers and build social skills.

More than 441,000 children currently participate in afterschool programs in New York, and a little over 122,000 of them participate in programs supported by state and federal

funds<sup>1</sup>. More than \$228 million in federal and state funds, of which about \$97 million is the federally-funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, currently support New York's afterschool programs<sup>2</sup>. Despite current funding, the demand for afterschool remains high in New York and across the country. For every child currently in an afterschool program in the state, four more are waiting to get in. The federal government, in efforts to meet this growing need for afterschool, launched [the Engage Every Student Initiative](#), which seeks to “provide high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities to every child who wants to participate” and encourages states to leverage ARP dollars to do so<sup>3</sup>. Undoubtedly, ARP funds present an enormous opportunity to leverage afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs in efforts to address learning loss and accelerate student success.



*“New York’s FY2021-2022 State Budget redirected 70% (\$629M of \$898M) of reserved state funds for learning loss to local districts through additional Learning Loss grants.”*

<sup>1</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2020). “2020 America after 3PM Data.”

<sup>2</sup> New York State Network for Youth Success. (2023). “Network for Youth Success State Budget Priorities.”

<sup>3</sup> Engage Every Student. (2023). “Engage Every Student.”



### III. OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN EDUCATION DOLLARS IN NEW YORK

New York State was allocated \$8.99 billion dollars through the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund. \$2.2 billion of this allocation was made available to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions including afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs. Of this \$2.2 billion, \$629 million of the \$898 million provided directly to the state was allocated as Learning Loss Grants to about 400 eligible school districts, and \$1.6 billion directly to all local education agencies, including charter schools. To meet federal requirements for how these funds should be used<sup>4</sup>, districts were required to spend 14.3 percent (\$89 million) each on afterschool or extended day activities and summer enrichment. The remainder of funds (\$449.4 million) would support activities to address the impact of lost instructional time.

This brief analyzes school district plans regarding the Learning Loss Grants (aka ARP state reserve funds) from three datasets (Impact on Lost Instructional Time; Comprehensive Afterschool; and Summer Learning Enrichment) to better understand the extent to which afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities were leveraged by school districts utilizing their ARP funds. Each dataset included descriptions from 400 different school districts – or 55% of the total school districts in New York State (731 school districts<sup>5</sup>). The datasets included varied numbers of descriptions (Table 1) from school districts that were then analyzed.

**TABLE 1: Number of Descriptions Analyzed in Each New York State Learning Loss Dataset**

NAME OF DATASET	NUMBER OF DESCRIPTIONS
Impact on Lost Instructional Time .....	<b>1,581</b>
Comprehensive After School .....	<b>783</b>
Summer Learning Enrichment.....	<b>765</b>

<sup>4</sup> ARP law required states to use the total amount of grant funds awarded to the State to carry out, directly or through grants or contracts,
 

- no less than 5 percent (\$449.4m) for activities to address learning loss by supporting the implementation of evidence-based intervention,
- no less than 1 percent (\$89.9m) to carry out the implementation of evidence-based summer enrichment program
- no less than 1 percent (\$89.9m) to carry out the implementation of evidence-based afterschool programs.

<sup>5</sup> New York State Education Department. (2023). "New York State Education at a Glance." <https://data.nysed.gov/>

## IV. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN LEARNING LOSS GRANT DATA SUMMARY

### A. On Addressing the Impact of Lost Instructional Time

Table A1 on page 5 provides a percentage table of interventions school districts identified in their ARP plans to address the impact of lost instructional time (ILIT). “Percentage of plans” indicates the total percentage of each type of intervention represented in all school district plans. “Percentage of total funds” indicates the percentage of the total dollar allocation for each type of intervention identified in school district plans.

- The most represented and funded intervention strategy was the Other Evidence-Based Interventions option, thus school districts allocated significant dollars towards interventions not specified.
- Comprehensive After School Programming (4.4%), Summer Learning Enrichment Activities (6.4%), and Community Schools Model Programming (1.5%) represented less than 13% of the evidence-based interventions school districts identified to address learning loss, with a combined total of ~\$48M indicated to go toward these interventions in the school district plans.

### B. On Implementing Comprehensive Afterschool

Table B1 shares information on the interventions identified in school districts’ ARP plans regarding the required implementation of afterschool, i.e. spending not less than 14.3 percent (\$89 million total) to provide evidence-based

comprehensive afterschool (CAS) programs. “Percentage of plans” indicates the distribution of interventions identified by school districts to provide comprehensive afterschool. “Percentage of total funds” shares the dollar amount and funding distribution for the interventions indicated to implement comprehensive afterschool.

Curriculum-aligned enrichment activities and high dosage tutoring programs emerged as the top two interventions school districts identified and allocated funds toward to implement evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs.

### C. On Implementing Summer Learning Enrichment

Table C1 provides a percentage table of interventions school districts indicated in their ARP plans regarding the required implementation of summer learning enrichment (SLE), i.e. spending not less than 14.3 percent (\$89 million total) to provide evidence-based summer enrichment programs. “Percentage of plans” indicates the distribution of interventions identified by school districts to provide summer enrichment. “Percentage of total funds” shares the dollar amount and funding distribution for the interventions indicated to implement summer enrichment programs.

Curriculum-aligned enrichment activities was the most selected intervention strategy and received a significant portion of available funding. Summer programs are using this strategy more than any other listed.



**A.1. Interventions Represented and Percentage of Funds Invested in ARP Addressing the Impact of Lost Instructional Time**

<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF PLANS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FUNDS</b> <i>(invested in millions)</i>
Other Evidence-Based Interventions	30.0%	31.0% (\$136)
Tailored/Individualized Acceleration	16.3%	22.8% (\$100.1)
Curriculum-Aligned Enrichment Activities	14.6%	14.7% (\$64.5)
Integrative Social and Emotional Learning	12.9%	8.7% (\$38)
High Dosage Tutoring Programs	8.5%	7.9% (\$34.8)
Summer Learning and Enrichment Activities	6.4%	5.7% (\$25)
Comprehensive After School Programming	4.4%	3.6% (\$15.8)
Trauma-Informed Practices	3.6%	2.6% (\$10.8)
Restorative Practices	1.9%	1.6% (\$7.1)
Community Schools Model Programming	1.5%	1.6% (\$7.2)

**B.1. Interventions Represented and Percentage of Funds Invested in ARP Comprehensive After School School District Plans**

<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF PLANS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FUNDS</b> <i>(invested in millions)</i>
Curriculum-Aligned Enrichment Activities	33.6%	34.1% (\$30.5)
High Dosage Tutoring Programs	26.1%	30.5% (\$27.3)
Other Evidence-Based Interventions	16.5%	14.4% (\$12.9)
Tailored/Individualized Acceleration	12.1%	11.9% (\$10.6)
Integrative Social and Emotional Learning	7.9%	5.4% (\$4.8)
Community Schools Model Programming	2.2%	1.9% (\$1.7)
Restorative Practices	0.9%	1.3% (\$1.1)
Trauma-Informed Practices	0.6%	0.5% (\$0.4)

**C.1. Interventions Represented and Percentage of Funds Invested in ARP Summer Learning Enrichment School District Plans**

<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF PLANS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FUNDS</b> <i>(invested in millions)</i>
Curriculum-Aligned Enrichment Activities	40.1%	44.8% (\$40.5)
Other Evidence-Based Interventions	24.0%	18.3% (\$16.5)
Tailored/Individualized Acceleration	15.7%	21.6% (\$19.6)
High Dosage Tutoring Programs	10.9%	10.4% (\$9.4)
Integrative Social and Emotional Learning	5.6%	3% (\$2.7)
Community Schools Model Programming	1.6%	1% (\$0.9)
Restorative Practices	1.2%	0.7% (\$0.7)
Trauma-Informed Practices	1.0%	0.3% (\$0.3)

## V. SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A school-community partnership leverages community-based organizations and their resources to deliver a more comprehensive approach to learning. These partnerships are a key strategy for connecting critical supports with youth and their schools. High quality partnerships utilize joint planning between schools, partners, students, and families. These partnerships also align their goals with the school's needs and maintain joint commitment to ongoing program improvement. Furthermore, school-community partnerships are a valuable strategy that promote enrichment, strengthens engagement, and leverages experience to help foster student growth, development, and care<sup>6</sup>.

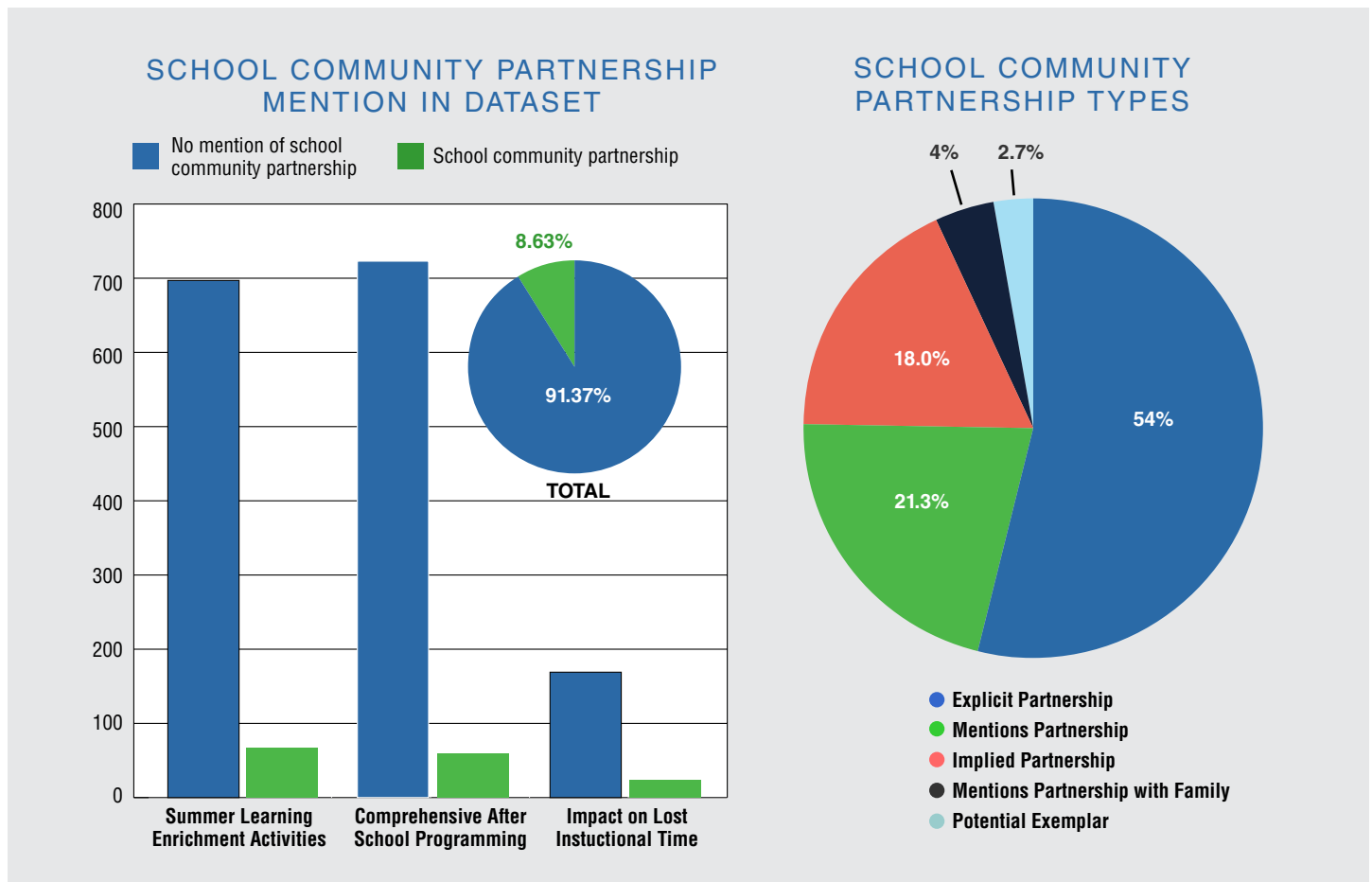
Overall, just about 8.6% (150 of 1739) of school district descriptions indicated engagement and/or intention to engage with community partners in their plans. Comparing across the 3 datasets, the ILIT school district plans showed the highest indication of school-community partnerships at 12.5% (24 of 169 descriptions), followed by SLE school district plans at 9% (67 of 764 descriptions) and CAS school district plans at 7.5% (59 of 782 descriptions).

Categories were created to further investigate how these

partnerships look like for school districts that demonstrated school-community partnerships. These included:

- Potential exemplar- These descriptions provide detailed information about how the school district is engaging community-based partners in efforts to address learning loss.
- Explicit partnership- These descriptions note a specific organization or partner that the school is working with. Partnership is clearly defined.
- Mentions partnership- These descriptions mention partnership, but do not specify the organization or services included within the partnership.
- Implied partnership- These descriptions imply there is partnership, but do not specifically state that there is partnership. Thus, it is unclear if the school district plans to fund or enter a formal partnership.
- Mentions partnership with family- These descriptions mention partnership explicitly with families.

Across all three datasets, 91 of these school district plan descriptions mention explicit partnerships while 59 either used vague descriptions regarding community partnerships or implied that there was a partnership.



<sup>6</sup> New York State Afterschool Network. (2020). "School-Community Partnerships: A Guidebook on Designing an Expanded Learning Time Program." Retrieved from: <https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Guidebook-8.27.14-Print3.pdf>.

## VI. DISCUSSION

New York State directed state set-aside funding from American Rescue Plan funding to school districts to address learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis provided in this brief reveals the initial strategies school districts indicated they would adopt to support their student populations. Overall, the analysis revealed that school districts planned to commit relatively low levels of funding for afterschool, summer, and the community schools strategy to address learning loss experienced by students. Additionally, the funding dedicated directly to comprehensive afterschool programs and summer enrichment learning largely focused on interventions that prioritized academic recovery. Further, the school district descriptions included few instances of school-community partnerships to help mitigate student learning loss and challenges. Investments in primarily academic gains with limited partnerships with the community is not the most effective use of ARP funding to support students in their recovery from the significant challenges they faced as a result of COVID-19.

Analysis of the school district plans submitted to the New York State Department of Education revealed:

**I. Low levels of investment in afterschool and summer programming to address the impact of lost instructional time.** ARP legislation specifically names afterschool and summer programs as evidence-based interventions that schools should prioritize and fund. Despite this, “comprehensive after school programming” and “summer learning and enrichment activities” as interventions to address the impact of lost instructional time, had low levels of investment. As standalone reserve funds, comprehensive afterschool programming and summer learning enrichment focused largely on academic interventions (discussed in the following section).

This limited investment in afterschool and summer programs in addressing learning loss highlights a missed opportunity. Many of the outcomes associated with afterschool programs are ideal for helping students recover from learning loss: Afterschool programs are proven to promote academic gains and improve students’ engagement in learning and motivation to learn<sup>7</sup>. Afterschool programs are associated with gains in math and

reading, improvement of grades, attendance, and classroom participation<sup>8</sup>. Afterschool programs foster an environment where students’ academic performance is enhanced, and is hence strongly positioned to support learning recovery.

**II. School districts prioritized interventions addressing academics instead of social emotional or trauma-informed interventions.** The data summarized in sections B and C highlight the types of interventions schools used with funding required for the implementation of comprehensive afterschool programs and summer learning enrichment programs. From these datasets, the interventions aimed at mitigating direct academic barriers (curriculum-aligned enrichment, tailored/individualized acceleration, and high-dosage tutoring programs) received high proportions of funding. Alternatively, interventions focused on the social emotional wellbeing of students consistently received the lowest proportion of funding and attention in school plans. As students and families work to recover from the significant trauma and isolation inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in programming that supports students holistically is imperative.

Unfortunately, this focus on curriculum-aligned activities and academics do not sufficiently address the current challenges students and families are experiencing. Students have experienced significant loss – including an estimated 167,000 children under the age of 18 that lost a parent or in-home caregiver to COVID-19<sup>9</sup>. Students need continued support through social emotional learning and safe environments to maximize their capacity to learn. Comprehensive afterschool and summer programs provided by experienced community partners create environments where students can improve their social and emotional competencies through development of relationship skills, increasing students’ sense of agency, and identity development<sup>10</sup>. Afterschool programs are also effective at reducing risky behaviors in youth and aiding in behavioral adjustment<sup>11</sup>. These programs are meant to function as more than extensions of the school day and provide additional services outside of homework help. When implementing afterschool and summer programming, it is important that schools leverage community partners that provide social emotional learning and trauma-informed care, which is pivotal to helping students and families heal.

<sup>7</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (April 2021). “The evidence base for afterschool and summer. <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/The-Evidence-Base-For-Afterschool-And-Summer-2021.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (April 2021). “The evidence base for afterschool and summer. <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/The-Evidence-Base-For-Afterschool-And-Summer-2021.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Social Policy Analytics & COVID Collaborative. (December 2021). “Hidden Pain: Children who lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19 and what the nation can do to help them.” <https://www.covidcollaborative.us/assets/uploads/img/HIDDEN-PAIN-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Naftzger, N. & Newman, J. (September 2021). “Harnessing the power of afterschool and summer programs to support recovery and reengagement. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Harnessing-the-Power-of-Afterschool-and-Summer-Programs-Brief-Recovery-Reengagement-Sept-2021.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (April 2021). “The evidence base for afterschool and summer. <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/The-Evidence-Base-For-Afterschool-And-Summer-2021.pdf>

### **III. Limited evidence of robust partnerships between schools and community-based organizations.**

School-community partnerships between school districts and community-based organizations are a valuable strategy for schools to leverage the expertise of the community to holistically address challenges students face. Strong school-community partnerships include joint planning between school and community partners, clearly defined roles within the program, consistent communication between parties, and alignment of program goals with school needs<sup>12</sup>. Robust partnerships can significantly increase the capacity of a school district while minimizing strain on current school staff or requiring schools to hire additional staff. Analysis of the school district ARP plans revealed few examples of robust school-community partnerships indicating a low prioritization of the strategy. Primarily, schools using their ARP funding on afterschool and summer programming opted to run in-house programming that required hiring staff or offering bonuses to current teaching staff. This practice expends the capacity of existing staff instead of leveraging existing expertise in the community. School-community partnerships are a best practice for delivering resources and supports to students to create more lasting impact through relationship building.

A strategy that effectively implements school-community partnerships, the community schools strategy, received some of the lowest levels of investment in all three datasets. The community schools strategy supports building school-community partnerships to organize resources in times of hardship to ensure students and families have access to necessities, such as food and healthcare. The community schools strategy transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student success. To facilitate school-community partnerships to deliver these resources, community schools coordinators are hired to understand the needs of their specific school community and build relationships between the school and community partners. Community schools coordinators are also a sound investment with every \$1 invested returning \$7 in net benefits<sup>13</sup>. As students work to overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19, and schools leverage federal funds to support them, the community schools strategy is uniquely positioned to leverage school-community partnerships and provide holistic support.

### **IV. Limited transparency on how school districts are using American Rescue Plan funding.**

“Other evidence-based interventions” was in the top three most named strategies for all three datasets and included a significant percentage of total invested funds. The choice of “other” gives minimal information about how the schools are spending the funds – which results in low levels of transparency and potential barriers to accountability. School districts were required to submit plans expeditiously with little time to flesh out specific details of planned intervention strategies. Blended approaches that did not neatly fit into named strategy categories easily could have been identified as “other-evidence based interventions.” This lack of transparency creates challenges for community members, education stakeholders, and decisionmakers working to understand how their local school districts are spending state set-aside ARP funding.

## **VII. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Collection of data on how school districts used and planned to use ARP funding is ongoing. As more data becomes available, there are continued opportunities to deepen stakeholder understanding for how school districts navigated a post-COVID education landscape. Updates to the school district plans (as reinforced in the state budget) analyzed in this report could shed more light on how schools adjusted their plans based on barriers and changing needs in their student populations. Further, this presents opportunities for schools to leverage the strategies discussed in this brief. As schools draw closer to the deadline for spending down their ARP and other COVID-19 relief funding, additional data on actual spending should become available and continue to inform stakeholder input. This data will provide further insight than this analysis is able to provide and is worth continued investigation. As the spending deadline draws nearer, school districts face significantly steep funding cliffs to navigate with no immediate explicit sustainability options available. Further foray into the development of school-community partnerships may provide pathways to sustainability for some districts. Supporting school districts in their efforts to sustain valuable student supports implemented with ARP funding may be increasingly important to ensure student success where such supports are needed in the long term.

<sup>12</sup> New York State Network for Youth Success. (2016). “School-Community Partnerships: A Guidebook on Designing an Expanded Learning Time Program.” [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Guidebook-Draft-8.27.14-WEB3.pdf](https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Guidebook-Draft-8.27.14-WEB3.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Apex & ABC Community School Partnership. (May 2019). “Return on Investment of a community school coordinator.” [https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI\\_Coordinator.pdf](https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI_Coordinator.pdf)



## VIII. LIMITATIONS

While this brief analyzes three datasets (Impact on Lost Instructional Time; Comprehensive Afterschool; and Summer Learning Enrichment) of school district plans to shed more light on how schools are using ARP education dollars, these plans do not necessarily indicate how ARP funds are actually being spent. Further investigation of new data is needed to explore this further.

The funding for which these plans were developed represent only seven percent of the total ARP ESSER III dollars that were provided, and also only made available to 400 eligible school districts. While this helps investigate the extent to which school districts are leveraging afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities to address learning loss, these funds (and thus the data analyzed) represents a small proportion of total ARP ESSER III funds allocated to school districts. Further investigation of the ARP ESSER III funds distributed directly to school districts could provide more insight on how school districts are leveraging expanded learning opportunities.

## IX. CONCLUSION

ARP infused unprecedented levels of funding into the school system nationwide and New York included additional resources through state set asides. However, significant factors and pressures created barriers to the ability of school districts to build long-term plans with ARP funding. ARP funding required school districts to design plans to address the challenges their students were facing in a short period of time with limited guidance, technical assistance, and the requirement of expediency. Further, schools were navigating their own COVID-19 related challenges such as staffing shortages and pivoting to all virtual learning. These factors, along with concerns of impending funding cliffs, limited the capacity for school districts to invest in proven, long-term strategies and interventions such as school-community partnerships. As a result, the descriptions did not effectively leverage the resources available in their communities to provide much needed services such as afterschool and summer programming.

Despite these challenges, there were school district plans that are exemplars that fostered robust, meaningful partnerships with community organizations. The practice of engaging the community in decisionmaking and disbursing funds to support existing organizations creates a precedent for future relationship building. The example set by these school districts and the recommendations in this brief can help support school districts, state-level decisionmakers, and community organizations.

*This brief, with the data analyzed in the document, was prepared prepared by Gabrielle Schwartz, Policy Coordinator, New York State Network for Youth Success and Michael del Campo, Policy Intern, New York State Network for Youth Success.*

**The mission of the New York State Network for Youth Success is to strengthen the capacity and commitment of communities, programs, and professionals to increase access to high-quality programs and services beyond the traditional classroom.**

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