

Opportunity Wisconsin: New report highlights how \$2.1B for WI from American Rescue Plan helps schools safely reopen

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MADISON, Wis.— Opportunity Wisconsin today released a [new report](#) highlighting how the American Rescue Plan is making historic investments to help Wisconsin schools safely reopen, a crucial first step for students and families to overcome this pandemic.

“The pandemic has left Wisconsin children feeling isolated and frustrated with school work, transformed the jobs of teachers, and forced parents and caretakers to pull triple-duty. Working a full-time job, caring for children, and functioning as in-home educators would be exhausting under normal circumstances; in a pandemic that job is nearly impossible,” said Meghan Roh, Opportunity Wisconsin program director. “The American Rescue Plan not only provides Wisconsin schools with the necessary resources to reopen safely, but it helps address some of the existing inequities in schooling and access that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. This historic investment would not have been possible without our elected leaders like Senator Baldwin, who helped deliver this critical relief. Unfortunately, instead of joining the fight on behalf of Wisconsin students, teachers, and families, folks like Senator Johnson and Wisconsin’s Republican congressional representatives fought against this important funding.”

A copy of Opportunity Wisconsin's [new report](#) is posted below.

Members of the media wishing to speak with Wisconsin residents benefitting from the American Rescue Plan should email press@opportunitywisconsin.org.

The American Rescue Plan Helps Wisconsin Schools Safely Reopen

American Rescue Plan in Wisconsin

- Wisconsin received [\\$2.1 billion](#) in funding for schools, including \$1.5 billion for K-12 schools and \$556.7 million for higher education.
- Milwaukee Public Schools, the largest school district in the state and the school district in the county with the [highest share](#) of Black students and students of color, received \$798 million, amounting to over \$11,000 per student.
- Wisconsin had cut [\\$67 million](#) in higher education funding from FY 2020 to FY 2021, so the \$556.7 million in federal funding will be critical for higher education institutions.
- Total funding and funding per student for Wisconsin local education agencies (LEAs) can be found in [this memo](#) from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.
- The ARP allocates more than [\\$15.5 million](#) for Head Start pre-kindergarten programs in Wisconsin. Head Start currently [serves](#) 15,441 Wisconsin children through 276 program locations, and this money will be crucial in expanding this life-changing program to more of Wisconsin's children.

Federal Support for Public Education During COVID-19

The American Rescue Plan provides over [\\$170 billion](#) to K-12 schools and higher education institutions across all states.

K-12 Schools

The ARP includes \$128.6 billion to elementary and secondary schools, the [largest-ever single federal investment in K-12 schools](#). State and local governments have suffered tremendous economic loss as they have tried to combat the pandemic while supporting their constituents, and especially while supporting educational institutions. Approximately 26 percent of state budgets are allocated to K-12 education. The funding from the American Rescue Plan will be critical for states to ensure that schools are able to make the financial decisions needed to keep students, teachers, and staff safe as they return to in-person learning.

Schools will be able to spend this money over the next three-and-a-half academic years as they work to ameliorate the effects of the pandemic on students, teachers, and faculty. This crucial federal funding is flexible, allowing states and schools to spend as needed, such as on repairing ventilation systems, reducing class size to allow for social distancing, and hiring support staff to care for the health of students, educators, and staff. However, it does require that states set apart a portion of the funding for learning loss programs, summer enrichment programs, and after school programs. This money will also help offset [unexpected costs](#) that many schools and state governments had taken on when the pandemic began and students transitioned to remote learning on things like technology and PPE.

Higher Education

The ARP allocates \$39.6 billion to institutions of higher education. This relief will be crucial to these institutions – since the pandemic began, 22 states have cut a total of [\\$1.9 billion](#) in funding for higher education, resulting in hundreds of thousands of layoffs. Public universities and colleges have faced budget cuts and loss of revenue from decreased enrollment and diminished athletic events while having to contend with the costs of COVID-19 testing and associated health accommodations. The burden of job loss and decreased wages/hours has not been felt equally: the average salary of those who lost their jobs was just [\\$40,000](#), usually those in administrative positions.

This funding will ensure that these establishments can pay their workers while continuing to provide their students with high-quality education. Institutions of higher education are required to allocate at least half of their funding to emergency financial aid grants to students as they navigate changes in their financial situations due to COVID-19. The ARP includes certain provisions to ensure that this federal funding goes where it's most needed, requiring states to avert cuts specifically to schools and school districts with high numbers of children living in poverty.