

# Leveraging Short Term Funding to Build Long Term Capacity

The recent passage of the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (H.R. 1319), specifically the [Education Stabilization Fund](#), along with prior related pandemic federal funding including the *Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Act of 2020* under the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act; PL 116-136) present educators an unprecedented opportunity to promote the social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) well-being of students in response to the well documented impact of the recent global health pandemic. Unfortunately, like all relief funding acts, there is a finite amount of additional funding and time provisions in which it must be spent. We strongly advise SEA and LEA leadership teams to carefully and strategically link funding targets to their current multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) action plan, or to create a comprehensive multi-year plan that focuses both on key academic and SEB student outcomes through a continuum of supports (see [Why Prioritize Behavior Support](#)). For those SEA and LEAs with active positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) or other social, emotional, and behavioral initiatives in place, the problem-solving framework can be applied to determine how best to use the funds. For those SEA and LEAs without a PBIS or MTSS leadership team that emphasizes a data-based decision-making process, we offer a set of steps to consider when making decisions (see below). Regardless, we recommend leadership teams keep the following four considerations in mind when making funding decisions\*:

1. Keep long-term student and staff outcomes in mind with all fiscal decisions. Consider the additional funds an opportunity to invest in systems of support that will continue to affect students long after the funding ends (see [PBIS Implementation Blueprint](#)).
2. When making short-term decision to meet immediate need include plans to embed into on-going systems of support (see [Michigan District Initiative Tool](#)). Ensure expenditures aligned with your SEA/LEA current and long term plans and avoid spending funds that will not add value.
3. Create an evaluation plan with clear measurable outcomes and a timeline to sample impact to ensure the investment is leading to your targeted student and staff outcomes. Ensure the plan has strategies to disaggregate data across groups, especially students with disabilities or from other marginalized groups, to continually examine for equitable benefit across groups of students and embed strategies to address any noted inequities (see [PBIS Evaluation Blueprint](#), [PBIS Cultural Responsive Field Guide](#)).
4. Be good consumers. Before investing in staff professional development, ensure the training a) links to current SEA/LEA systems of support, b) includes measures to check for implementation fidelity, c) includes strategies to provide performance feedback to implementers, and d) includes a plan to address implementation challenges (see [PBIS Professional Development Blueprint](#), [Interconnected System Framework](#)).



Regardless of the level of current PBIS / MTSS implementation, SEA and LEA leadership teams are strongly encouraged to follow a problem-solving framework:

**Start with data.** What are the current student academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs? Review both formal (e.g., academic test scores, passing grades, behavioral infractions resulting in disciplinary action, universal screeners, school climate surveys) and informal (e.g., attendance, office discipline referrals, nurse and behavior health referrals) data. Patterns across LEAs, or schools within a district, as well as individual school data should be considered before investing in personnel, professional development, or curricula to provide a direct match between documented need and interventions and supports selected (see [PBIS Evaluation Blueprint](#), [State System Fidelity Inventory](#), [District Systems Fidelity Inventory](#), [Hexagon Tool](#), [Tiered Fidelity Inventory](#)).

**Select evidence-based practices.** By selecting interventions and supports that have strong empirical evidence, in addition to matching to unique LEA and school data patterns, the likelihood of short- and long-term impact is increased (see [What Works Clearinghouse](#), [Research Evidence Supporting PBIS](#), [NCII Tools Chart](#)). In addition to strong empirical evidence, also consider the feasibility and acceptability of the practice within the LEA or school context. If staff indicate that the practice does not fit the current instructional model, would require additional uniquely trained personnel to implement with fidelity, or does not fit the cultural context of the students and community, odds are the practice will not have the intended impact and/or sustain beyond the funding period.

**Focus the majority of funds on strengthening your current systems.** Remember, the funds will end. Avoid hiring additional personnel that cannot be fiscally supported once funding expires. We recommend, using the above two steps, to invest in professional development that builds the skill sets, fluency, and capacity of current SEA/LEA personnel. Based on the selected data-driven interventions and supports, create a plan to a) build skill mastery among current academic and SEB lead personnel, b) create timelines and professional development opportunities for lead personnel to train specialist at the individual school level to build within school expertise, c) create timelines and professional development opportunities for lead personnel to train school leadership teams (and possibly whole staff) focusing on their unique role in supporting sustained implementation, d) be prepared for on-going provision of technical assistance to LEA or school leadership teams to promote fidelity of implementation, e) build in opportunities to provide performance feedback to staff, and f) work to embed the targeted interventions and supports into, or create new, on-going SEA/LEA wide systems. See [Implementers Blueprint](#), [State & District Systems Fidelity Inventory](#), [State Improvement and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices](#) for additional information on building sustainable systems of support.



The recent infusion of funds into the American public school system is a unique opportunity to address the impact events of the past two years have had on students and staff. More importantly, if invested wisely, they present an opportunity to prepare SEA and LEAs through PBIS and MTSS frameworks to address the next impactful event that threatens to elevate student risk (see [PBIS Recovery Plans](#) for more information).

*\*This document provides general recommendations from the Center for PBIS on increasing capacity to address student's social, emotional, and behavioral success. No endorsement is implied nor should be inferred on the part of the U.S. Department of Education. For specific fiscal expenditure requirements and additional information, we encourage contacting your state or territory department of education and visit <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/>*

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