



America Forward Guidance Addressing Learning Loss Through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Who we are:

America Forward (www.americaforward.org) is the nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit, a pioneering national venture philanthropy organization that invests in breakthrough social entrepreneurs and systems-change initiatives, catalyzes and builds their impact, and transforms how government and philanthropy pursue social change to ensure that all people can thrive. The America Forward Coalition is made up of more than 100 innovative, high-impact [organizations](#) across the country that are working to solve some of our most pressing challenges in education, workforce development, and poverty alleviation.

Principles:

We recommend the U.S. Department of Education (ED) encourage state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to leverage the COVID-19 relief funds to fully support the needs of the whole learner, including academic, social and emotional needs. In addition, we recommend that SEAs and LEAs take the opportunity to do more than “what they have always done,” and look at evidence-based innovations that can not only help our school systems recover, but also help build systems that are improved for every student.

To that end, we recommend that ED provide guidance to SEAs and LEAs that aligns with the following five principles:

I. Student focused, centered on equity

- Focus on how to better understand, mitigate, and/or address the specific impact of the COVID-19 crisis and educational inequity and disruptions on the holistic development of students -- specifically for English learners, children with disabilities, students of color, students from low-income families, students who have barriers to high school completion, and opportunity youth, as well as along lines of race, sex, sexuality and gender identity.

II. Innovation

Leverage innovative approaches of schools, educational organizations, and nonprofits that address the impacts of the pandemic, including its impacts on students’ social, emotional, cognitive, creative, and physical skills, and the disruption to student learning across these skills as a result of experienced trauma.

III. Evidence-based, whole-learner approaches

Grants should support school districts and nonprofit partners to develop and implement evidence-based, trauma-informed, whole-learner approaches that include a focus on:

- Developmental relationships, as well as environments of safety and belonging;
- Development of physical, social-emotional, creative, and cognitive, including academic, skills and mindsets, and personalization of learning and development;
- Tiered support systems that build the capacity of teachers, teachers' assistants, school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, mental health professionals and other staff members to respond to different levels of student need;
- Partnerships between grantees and health and mental health providers; and
- Meaningful engagement of parents/caregivers in their students' educational success by encouraging evidence-based, effective collaboration between schools and parents/caregivers.

Example of America Forward Coalition member implementing whole-learner approaches on the ground:

- ***Turnaround for Children** connects the dots between science, adversity, and school performance by translating research from the science of learning and development into integrated systems, structures, and practices for schools to enable each and every child to thrive, particularly those who have been impacted by significant adversity. Building on 17 years of experience working with schools and a deep understanding of this research, Turnaround's tools and services—for educators and school and systems leaders—help catalyze positive developmental relationships and learning environments filled with safety and belonging. They also initiate the intentional development of the critical social-emotional and cognitive skills, mindsets, and habits necessary for healthy, whole-child development and academic achievement, no matter what obstacles a child may have faced. The programs resonate with those engaged in them: 83% of educators would recommend Turnaround's professional learning series to a colleague, and 79% of school leaders say the series has impacted their practice.*

IV. Partnerships

- Partnerships are critical to ensure that SEAs and LEAs can fill gaps in expertise and implement strategies at scale. ED should encourage partnerships with evidence-based

nonprofits and model providers that can serve youth, opportunity youth, educators, and school and system leaders.

Examples of America Forward Coalition members implementing innovative approaches on the ground:

- ***New Classrooms*** is a national nonprofit that partners with schools to design and implement innovative learning models. Its work is driven by a commitment to create and inspire better ways to give every student an educational foundation for lifelong success. The first learning model is called Teach to One: Math (TTO), which middle and high schools across the country—public schools, district schools, charter schools, independent schools—can adopt as their core math program. TTO ensures each student is learning the right math lesson at the right time to best meet their individual needs. It is used by thousands of students in schools nationwide. An independent third-party study found that students across the full set of 14 TTO schools that operated the program for three years saw 23% greater learning gains than students nationally on the NWEA MAP test. Students grew even more—53% above the national average—in schools aligned to growth-aligned accountability measures.
- ***Transcend*** takes an innovative approach to school redesign, helping communities move away from our current 150-year-old “industrial model,” which perpetuates inequity by taking a one-size-fits-all approach, defining success narrowly, emphasizing compliance and passive learning, and neglecting the varying needs of all students. Transcend does not advocate for one single, new model of “school.” Rather, it sees the need for two different processes: one that helps communities arrive at their “why” for change by exploring the science of learning, future trends, and the experiences of children traditionally at the margins of school; and another that helps communities create, test, codify, and spread a diversity of new school models designed to address these urgencies. These models include public-private partnerships to bring local businesses into a high school focused on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math; school communities with radically different schedules and routines to support students’ social-emotional learning; and schools where students and their families define their purpose and chart a path toward that purpose.

V. Tutoring, Student Success Coaching, and Postsecondary Advising (T/C/A)

Support T/C/A interventions that have an evidence base demonstrating how adults and/or near peers develop relationships with students/youth through holistic, personalized models that build academic mastery; social emotional well-being; habits of success, agency, and direction; and ultimately support students/youth in overcoming a range of structural obstacles embedded in our social and education systems.

Examples of America Forward Coalition members implementing T/C/A on the ground:

- **City Year** helps students and schools succeed. It recruits and trains a diverse group of young adults to serve as AmeriCorps members in schools all day, every day—student success coaches who work as tutors, mentors, and role models, preparing students with the skills and mindsets to thrive in school and in life. In partnership with teachers, City Year AmeriCorps members provide individualized academic and social-emotional support to students who need it most; serve as essential resources in the classroom; and contribute to a positive school culture, climate, and community. In 2018-2019, 3,000 AmeriCorps members served in 349 schools across 29 U.S. cities. Through their work in schools and communities, City Year AmeriCorps members not only make a difference in the lives of students they serve, but also acquire valuable skills that prepare them to become the next generation of civically engaged leaders.
- **College Advising Corps** is a national nonprofit increasing the number of first-generation, low income, and/or underrepresented students applying to, enrolling in, and graduating from college. Believing a college education constitutes the greatest determinant of upward social mobility and lifetime earning potential, College Advising Corps places recent graduates from its partner colleges in underserved high schools to act as full-time college advisers. In addition to guiding students through the admissions and financial aid processes, advisers work with teachers and administrators to instill a college going culture in the school. Corps advisers take an open-door, whole-school approach and embed themselves in the school community, opening the eyes of students and their parents to the possibility of a postsecondary degree. College Advising Corps students also persist in their postsecondary studies at rates mirroring the national average despite its serving schools with large numbers of low-income and first-generation college students.

ADDENDUM:

Key Definitions

The term “**learning model**” means—

- A school-based program developed around a core set of outcomes and design tenets which integrates instructional and operational components in order to enable a set of pedagogical practices that shape a significant part of a student’s total experience.

The term “**model provider**” refers to an organization that can accelerate efforts to create a coherent school design with aligned services and programs reimagine public schools that does the following:

- Partners with schools and systems to improve learning outcomes for a whole school or a meaningful portion, such as a full content area for a grade band (e.g., middle school math, K-8 social-emotional learning).
- Provides schools with implementation and change management support, either as a direct service or through trusted third-party partners.
- Sets ambitious goals for student outcomes and shares in the responsibility and accountability for results.

The term “**innovative learning models**” means—

- A learning model of education that includes a range of solutions, such as integrated tools, resources, systems, and supports - which can leverage can technological platforms and go beyond point solutions - developed to help schools reach identified learning outcomes coherent with holistic, whole-child school design.
- These models prioritize principles such as student agency, personalization, real-world relevance, collaboration, identity development; and reflect an approach to schooling that seeks to make innovations beyond the standardized operating model that has characterized American education for more than a century.

The term “**trauma-informed approaches**” means—

- Evidence-based professional development that promotes a shared understanding among teachers, teachers’ assistants, school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other staff that—
 - traumatic experiences are common among students;
 - trauma can cause a disruption to student learning and has been linked to changes in student mood, behavior, concentration, and relationships in school;
 - traumatic experiences do not inherently undermine the capabilities of students to reach high expectations in academics and life;
 - school-wide learning environments where all students and adults experience physical and emotional safety; a sense of belonging; and have positive

- developmental relationships enable students to succeed despite traumatic experiences; and
- services, supports, and programs provided to meet individual student needs should be trauma-informed and culturally-relevant, and increase student connection to the school-wide learning environment;
- Adoption of disciplinary procedures and practices that—
 - accompany disciplinary actions with holistic assessments and positive behavioral interventions and supports that address the underlying causes of student behavior, including trauma;
 - end harsh, punitive, or exclusionary disciplinary practices, replacing them with evidence-based restorative practices that build a culture of trust; and
 - do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or gender identity), disability, English proficiency status, migrant status, or age consistent with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 Act (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.), title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (42 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.); and
- Activities that engage teachers, teachers' assistants, school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other staff in a process of school-based design and planning to—
 - develop and promote a school-wide culture of belonging, support and understanding
 - help all students feel belonging, support, understanding and connection to the school community;
 - support all students in forming positive developmental relationships with adults and peers, understanding and managing emotions, achieving success academically and in extracurricular areas, and experiencing physical and psychological health and well-being;
 - promote teamwork and effective communication among all staff as well as shared responsibility for every student;
 - integrate evidence based-practices that build physical, social-emotional, cognitive and creative skills into rigorous academic instruction; and
 - recognize and prevent adult implicit bias and actions stemming from such bias.

The term **“whole-learner approaches”** means education based on evidence-based instructional approaches that –

- Support physical, social-emotional, creative and cognitive skill development;
- Are grounded in the science of learning and development, and reflect the dynamic, interconnected nature of how students learn and interact with the world by allowing

students to engage in meaningful, engaging, iterative, socially interactive, real-world, culturally affirming and joyful learning experiences; and

- Create conditions for optimal learning and development for every young person by focusing on approaches to teaching and learning that prioritize and integrate developmental relationships, students' safety and sense of belonging, intentional development of a breadth of students' skills and mindsets, and rich instructional experiences that draw on evidence-based, hands-on, playful learning practices that help students practice joyful, lifelong learning.
- Effectively weave together direct instruction with guided teaching and learning and includes: (1) opportunities for student-directed experiences within a framework constructed by educators; and (2) open exploration in which learners develop a sense of agency and voice by making choices about the content and process of learning that embraces concrete rigorous academic learning goals in contexts that are relevant to learners' interests and goals and connected to their communities.

The terms “**tutoring/student success coaching/postsecondary advising**” mean:

- Tutoring: Engaging with students/youth on rigorous academic content in 1-on-1 or small group formats;
- Student Success Coaching: Developing deep relationships with students/youth to provide a structured and integrated combination of mentoring relationships, academic coaching, social emotional support, and/or partnering with teachers to enhance school and classroom environments; and
- Postsecondary Advising: Supporting students/youth to successfully navigate postsecondary pathways, including conventional two- and four-year institutions of higher education as well as alternative and innovative pathways to credentials and careers. This programming can include “to postsecondary” advising, “through postsecondary” advising, and/or “to first career” advising.