



# HOW TO PRIORITIZE FUNDING FOR STUDENTS' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

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AS STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS APPROACH THE END OF ESSER FUNDS, THEY MUST DETERMINE WHICH PROGRAMS TO KEEP AND WHICH ONES TO CUT WITH LIMITED FUNDING. Post-pandemic, district and state leaders should prioritize investment choices like the ones below to financially support student well-being with evidence-based programs and practices. Implementation of these policies within states must be done with fidelity and ongoing monitoring to truly improve student outcomes.

- **Implement [evidence-based strategies and structures for school safety and discipline](#)<sup>1</sup> that improve school climates and benefits all students.**
  - Reallocate funding from harmful approaches (like metal detectors) to [opportunities and programs](#)<sup>2</sup> that are evidence-based to equitably create safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.
  - Invest in professional development opportunities and coaching for [positive discipline practices](#).<sup>3</sup>
  - Invest in collecting, disaggregating, cross-tabulating, and reporting discipline and absentee data for school leaders to better support students.
- **Ensure educators have professional development that enhances their knowledge and evidence-based skills to holistically support students' social, emotional, and academic development with cultural relevance.**
  - Invest in training and resources for [anti-bias mindsets](#),<sup>4</sup> [cultural competence](#),<sup>5</sup> classroom management, and skill-building to support whole-child development.
- **[Invest in wraparound supports to meet students' needs](#).<sup>6</sup>**
  - Invest in [community and school resources](#)<sup>7</sup> to meet the holistic needs of students, including mental health screeners, mental health professionals, and supports for basic and academic needs.
  - Utilize [federal and state funding streams that are available for multi-tiered systems of support](#),<sup>8</sup> as well as for [programs](#)<sup>9</sup> that help address the pipeline of qualified mental health services and supports in the classroom.

- **Build and strengthen family and community engagement<sup>10</sup> to ensure practitioners can best meet students' needs.**
  - Invest in the development of [guides](#)<sup>11</sup> to support practitioners with outreach strategies, engagement and re-engagement for both students and families, and community partner coordination.
  - Invest in [state-level resources](#)<sup>12</sup> to support LEAs in prioritizing positive intentional relationships between students, staff and families; attending to students' individual needs; and responding to student behavior with appropriate support.
  - Invest in stakeholder engagement groups to collaborate with students, families, and educators in developing engagement solutions.
- **Adopt curricula that are both rigorous and reflective of students' diverse backgrounds,<sup>13</sup> experiences, and interests to create a classroom environment that acknowledges and deeply engages all students.**
  - Invest in professional learning opportunities for teachers to support students academically with rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula.
  - Invest in targeted academic learning opportunities to [accelerate learning](#).<sup>14</sup>

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These systemic policy approaches to supporting students' SEAD are crucial to creating lasting and equity-focused impacts. State and district leaders can use these concrete examples to sustain positive outcomes [beyond the end of ESSER funding](#)<sup>15</sup> by ensuring investments fit into the overall strategy to address the needs of students.

For details, [read the full brief](#).<sup>16</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. <https://edtrust.org/resource/how-school-discipline-impacts-students-social-emotional-and-academic-development-sead/>
2. <https://edtrust.org/resource/watch-out-for-the-fiscal-cliff-advocating-for-education-equity-as-esser-spending-winds-down/>
3. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/Trauma%20Informed%20Discipline%20Response%20and%20Behavior%20System.pdf>
4. <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/470/SDIP%202022%20Final.pdf>
5. <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Black-African-American/>
6. <https://edtrust.org/resource/how-mental-health-supports-impact-social-emotional-and-academic-development-sead/>
7. <https://appbhatrainings.health.maryland.gov/onlinetraining>
8. <https://www.branchingminds.com/blog/how-can-my-school-district-find-funding-for-mtss>
9. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-opens-applications-two-k-12-mental-health-programs-increase-number-mental-health-providers-schools>
10. <https://edtrust.org/resource/student-family-community-engagement-sead/>
11. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/arphcyresourceguide.asp>
12. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/district-support/2020-2021-student-well-being-vendor-guide.pdf>
13. <https://edtrust.org/resource/the-search-for-more-complex-racial-and-ethnic-representation-in-grade-school-books/>
14. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/California-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf>
15. <https://edtrust.org/resource/budgeting-for-equity-beyond-esser-a-guide-to-actionable-state-and-district-policy-responses-to-the-fiscal-cliff/>
16. <https://edtrust.org/resource/esser-funding-social-emotional-development>