



## Teach Plus Mississippi: Teacher Input on District Stimulus Spending

Teach Plus is a national nonprofit that empowers teachers to lead improvements in educational policy and practice. Through its Policy Fellowship, Teach Plus Mississippi trains highly effective teachers across the state in policy, advocacy, communications, and research in order to shape policies that improve equity and opportunities for students. As classroom teachers, Teach Plus Policy Fellows are deeply committed to ensuring success for every student in Mississippi.

### The Problem

Since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, Teach Plus teacher leaders have witnessed already-wide opportunity gaps grow as low-income communities and communities of color have been harmed the most by the economic, health, and educational impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. In [Learning Through the Pandemic](#), Mississippi teachers spoke clearly about the need for schools to address the academic needs of students, the professional development needs of educators, and the social-emotional needs of both.

Even in the midst of yet another wave of COVID-19, which is already causing another round of school closures and disruptions in learning, Mississippi school districts are looking to use federal stimulus funds to make bold, strategic investments that will help address the continued impact the pandemic has had on students and teachers.

*“Administrators have an idea of what is going on, but the teachers know what is completely necessary and how the pandemic has impacted the students”*

— Mississippi Teacher

### The Solution

The **Consolidated Appropriations Act** provides \$54 billion to invest in K12 education, and the **American Rescue Plan** invests \$123 billion. These funds—alongside a strong commitment to preserving state education funding—could make an impact for the most underserved students in our state. While the Mississippi Department of Education received millions of dollars in stimulus dollars, the vast majority of these funds have gone to districts. Below are recommendations from teachers across Mississippi on how the state and districts should invest education dollars in the coming year. Each of our recommendations comply with the list of allowable expenditures included in the American Rescue Plan.

1. **Mental Health Supports:** Invest in [mental health resources](#) for students and teachers; and [training in trauma-informed instruction](#) for educators.

*“Kids who have unaddressed trauma have brains that cannot function normally. We need REAL mental health care .”*

— Teacher from East Mississippi



Mental Health Resources for Students and Teachers:

- Free SEL webinars and resources from FuelEd ([Link](#))
- Mental Health First Aid Trainings from Teen Health Mississippi ([Link](#))
- COVID-19 resources from the [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#) ([Link](#))

2. **Professional Growth & Development:** Invest in professional development on virtual instruction, accelerating learning in response to lost learning time, and incorporating technology into instructional practices.

*“Virtual learning is here and isn’t going away. We should embrace it and improve the areas where internet access is weak.”*

— Teacher from the Mississippi Delta

Accelerated Learning and Virtual Instruction Resources:

- COVID-19 School Response Toolkit from The New Teacher Project (TNTP) ([Link](#))
- Apps for more engaging virtual learning, such as [Flipgrid](#), [Padlet](#), and [Along](#)

3. **Academic Supports:** Invest in increased access to devices and broadband for all students; expanded learning time through after school, extended day, and summer school; high-dosage tutoring to make up for lost instructional time; and culturally responsive instructional materials and curricula. School leaders must ensure there are sufficient resources available for bilingual students, as well as students who qualify for special education services.

*“I think special populations were hurt the most and thus they must be included in spending and get a large portion of the funding to ensure equity.”*

— Teacher from Central Mississippi

High-Quality Instructional Materials:

- Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter from the Mississippi Department of Education ([Link](#))
- High-Quality Instructional Materials from Ed Reports ([Link](#))

## Conclusion

If our state is to rebound from the devastating effects of the pandemic, it will require a lasting commitment to strategic investments in education. If Mississippi invests in the teacher-informed and equity-driven priorities listed above, we have a chance to come back from the pandemic stronger and more equitable than before.