

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021: A guide for K-12 educators



Table of contents

Introduction

page 03 >

CHAPTER 1

Summary of the provisions for K-12 education

page 04 >

CHAPTER 2

How are funds distributed at the state level?

page 06 >

CHAPTER 3

How can you access funds at the district level?

page 7 >

CHAPTER 4

How can you use the funds?

page 8 >

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

page 10 >

About RingCentral

page 11 >



Introduction

In March 2021, the US government passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to stimulate the economy in the wake of a devastating public health crisis. Through that bill, almost \$123 billion will go to the public K-12 system.

This ebook explores what this funding means for the education system. It explains how funds are delivered at the state level, how you can access funds at the district level, and ways in which you can use that funding in your classroom to create a better learning and teaching experience.

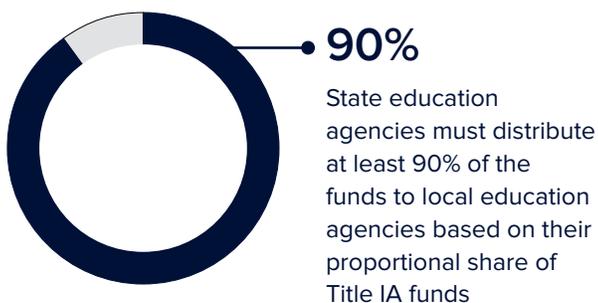
Summary of the provisions for K-12 education



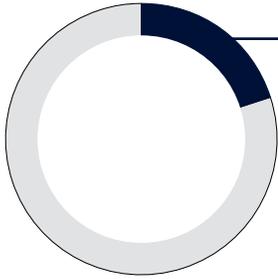
The American Rescue Plan allocated \$122.7 billion to the country's public K-12 education system. This represents the [largest one-time federal transfer of funds](#) to the country's education system in American history.

Since the public health crisis unfolded in the spring of 2020, two other relief bills passed through Congress. While they devoted resources to the K-12 system, both bills together only provided approximately \$67 billion.

Here's an overview of the key provisions of the bill as it pertains to K-12 education:



- The funds go into the existing [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund](#) (established at the end of March 2020 through the CARES Act)
- [State education agencies](#) must distribute at least 90% of the funds to local education agencies based on their proportional share of Title IA funds
- State education agencies must spend at least 5% of the funds to address learning loss, 1% on summer programs, 1% on comprehensive, evidence-based after-school programming, and no more than 0.5% can be used on administrative fees
- Local education agencies must reserve at least 20% of their funds to address learning loss



• **20%**

Local education agencies must reserve at least 20% of their funds to address learning loss

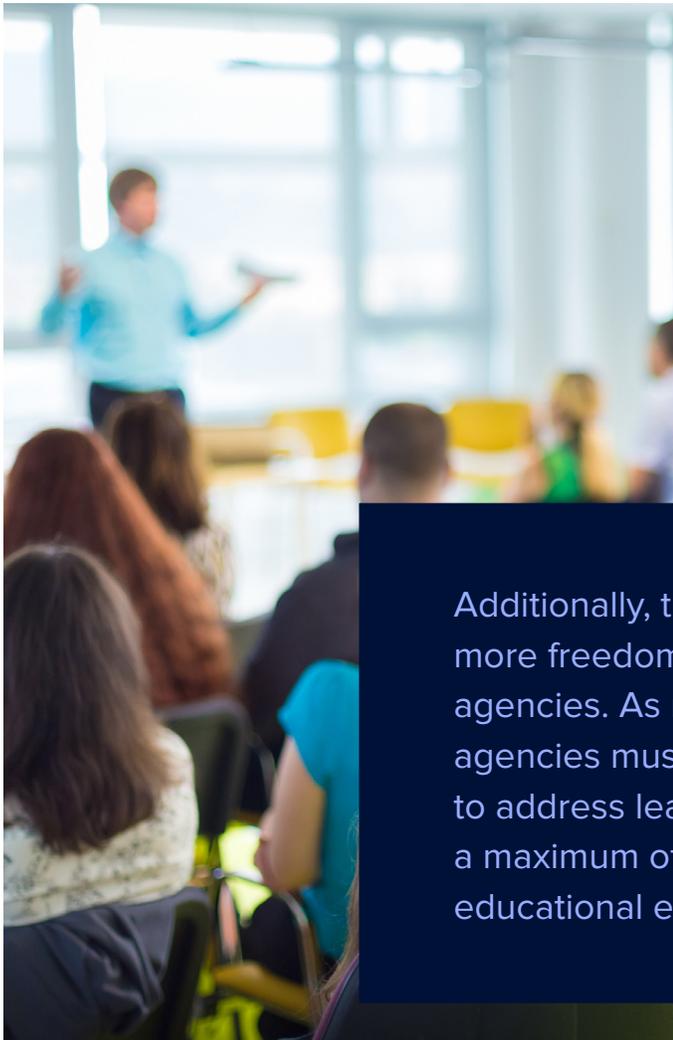
The bill outlines approved ways in which local education agencies can address learning loss:

- Learning or summer enrichment programs
- Extended school days
- Comprehensive after-school programs
- Extended school year programs

If states have [remaining funds](#), they can use them in the following ways:

- Extending the school year
- Summer enrichment programs
- Evidence-based tutoring programs
- Safely reopening schools
- Upgrading school facilities to create physically and psychologically healthy learning environments
- Investing in wraparound support (such as through [community schools](#), which create a partnership between schools and community resources)
- Stabilizing and diversifying the educator workforce
- Rebuilding the educator pipeline by recruiting more teachers

The funds to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund will be available until the end of September 2023. However, funds allocated to state education agencies must be spent within one year of receipt.



Additionally, the bill gives local education agencies more freedom with the funds than state education agencies. As mentioned earlier, local education agencies must dedicate at least 20% of their funds to address learning loss, meaning that they have a maximum of 80% of those funds for approved educational expenses (more on that later).

How are funds distributed at the state level?



Within a few weeks of the bill's approval, the federal government will [distribute funding](#) to individual states.

To aid states in distributing these funds, the federal departments of Education and Health and Human Services will develop guiding documents. That being said, once states receive the funds, state education and human service agencies must decide on how to allocate the money.

Here's an approximate breakdown of fund distribution at the state level:

- \$21.9 billion for learning recovery to local education agencies and school districts, which must be dispersed within 60 days. Each district must use 20% of its funds to address learning loss recovery
- \$39 billion will go to childcare agencies, including for school-age childcare. State human services and local education agencies determine the distribution of these funds
- \$8.45 billion to state education agencies. Each state will disperse funds differently, and at this point, most states have most likely not figured out a process for fund distribution.

Experts on the American education system believe there will most likely be a grant competition, either run by the state education agency or by a third party to whom the state has entrusted the funds. For after-school programs, it's possible that states will channel funding through [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#)

- \$350 billion to counties and state governments, which could go to after-school programs, summer learning, childcare, or other approved uses

How can you access the funds at the district level?



Once states receive funding from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, they must distribute at least 90% of that money to districts based on [Title IA of the Every Student Succeeds Act \(signed into law in 2015\)](#).



How can educators access those funds at the district level? States will have to figure out their distribution process. Experts on the American education system predict **states will create an application process** for schools to access these funds. Application procedures will vary from state to state.

How can you use these funds?



The biggest question that K-12 educators have is, “How can I use these funds?”

The driving goal of these funds are to address learning loss. However, there is quite a bit of leeway as to how educators can use the money in a K-12 setting. A maximum of 80% of money that goes to local education agencies can be used for anything that was regularly funded by the federal government, or anything necessary to respond to and recover from the health crisis is permissible.

What’s considered permissible under the American Rescue Plan?

There are a [number of permissible activities](#) and funding areas under the American Rescue Plan aside from addressing learning loss:

- Coordinating with public health departments to make learning environments safe
- Addressing the needs of students from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and youth in foster care
- Mental healthcare services
- Repairs to facilities to make them safer and healthier
- Maintaining the operation of schools and the continuity of services (including employing existing staff)
- Purchasing technology (including technology used for distance learning)

There are a number of permissible activities and funding areas under the American Rescue Plan aside from addressing learning loss:

Investing in a distance learning platform

The global health crisis forced schools across the country to close. Suddenly, students had to learn online. Many schools weren't equipped to handle the transition – they used point systems that didn't meet the needs of students or teachers. It was difficult for everyone involved.

While recovery efforts are underway, and many schools are planning to reopen, no one can predict when it may be necessary to move to remote learning once more. That's why it makes sense to invest in a distance learning platform now.

What should you look for in a distance learning platform?

When thinking about a distance learning platform, what should you look for? A unified communications platform offers the features you need:

- Videoconferencing
- Telephony
- Chat
- File sharing and collaboration
- Integration with learning management software
- Integration with emergency response systems

Why does a unified communications platform make the most sense for K-12 schools? Here are a few reasons:

- It's flexible
- Students, teachers, parents and the school community can access the unified communications platform on mobile devices
- The integration with learning management software saves time and effort for educators and students
- It reduces the number of communication tools that your school community uses

Unified communications platforms offer flexibility

Educators can teach synchronously and record their lessons for later. Moreover, unified communications platforms include telephony and chat, so there's more than one way to keep in touch with students and their families.

Students can access unified communications platforms through mobile devices

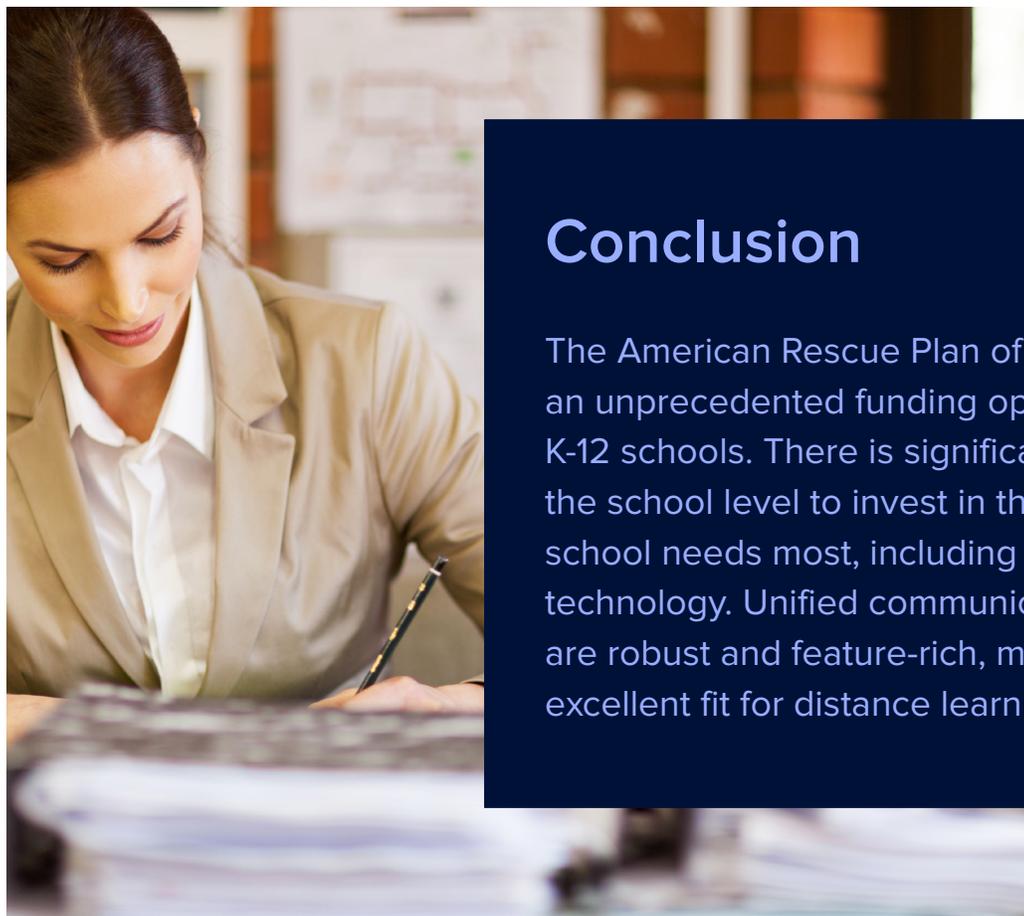
Mobile devices are becoming more and more ubiquitous. It's not uncommon for even young students to know how to use a smartphone or tablet.

One of the benefits of a unified communications platform is that it works on mobile devices. RingCentral's unified communications platform allows for one-click audio and video access within a browser or from the RingCentral app.

Integration with learning management software saves time and effort

Another benefit of unified communications platforms is that they integrate with learning management software. [Learning management software](#) serves as the backbone for remote learning.

An integration means that students and educators can access the learning management software from within the unified communications platform. They don't have to waste time or effort with point solutions.



Conclusion

The American Rescue Plan of 2021 represents an unprecedented funding opportunity for K-12 schools. There is significant freedom at the school level to invest in the things the school needs most, including distance learning technology. Unified communications platforms are robust and feature-rich, making them an excellent fit for distance learning solutions.

About RingCentral

RingCentral is a leading provider of unified communication tools suited for remote learning. Our virtual learning platforms support faculty and students at institutions of higher learning everywhere.

To learn more about our remote learning platform, [get a demo](#).

With RingCentral, learning is always in session.

Learn more about RingCentral for Education at ringcentral.com/education.

For more information, please contact a sales representative.

Visit us at ringcentral.com/education or call 844-569-2989.

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of cloud Message Video Phone™ (MVP™), customer engagement, and contact center solutions for businesses worldwide. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems that it replaces, RingCentral empowers modern mobile and distributed workforces to communicate, collaborate, and connect via any mode, any device, and any location. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading third-party business applications and enables customers to easily customize business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.

RingCentral

RingCentral, Inc. 20 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002. ringcentral.com