



# The A+ Advocate Toolkit:

## Effectively Spending COVID Dollars on Students



EDUCATION  
PARTNERSHIP



# About this Toolkit:



## The Big Idea:



Alabama's schools have received over \$3 billion in COVID relief funds from the federal government. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in our kids and schools. In order to know this investment is making a difference, we need to know what school districts are spending it on.

## About this Toolkit:

This toolkit is for families, educators, and communities to use with the [A+ COVID School Spending Tracker](https://policy.aplusala.org/covid-spending) ([policy.aplusala.org/covid-spending](https://policy.aplusala.org/covid-spending)). It includes information about COVID relief funding for schools, successful strategies that we know work for student recovery, and ways to get involved with your district's planning.

## Here is a preview of what you will see:

### PART 1: Overview

- Overview of COVID School Spending (page 2)
- Now What? Ways to get involved (page 3)

### PART 2: Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

- Effective Teaching Practices to Address Learning Loss (page 5)
  - High-Impact Tutoring Programs (page 6 )
  - High-Quality Summer and Afterschool Programs (page 8 )
  - Using High-Quality Instructional Materials (page 10)
- Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (page 11)
  - Providing School-Based Mental Health Services (page 12 )
  - Strengthening Relationships between Teachers & Students (page 14)
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  - Meaningful Parent and Family Engagement (page 16 )
  - Supporting Student Attendance (page 18)

# Overview:

## Why do COVID dollars matter?

Alabama schools are receiving \$3.14 billion in COVID relief funding. This is the largest amount of one-time funds from the federal government that our schools will likely see in our lifetimes. We must make sure that our state is using this money to get students the resources they need to recover from the pandemic.

**To do that, the voices of parents, families, students, and communities need to be heard and valued alongside those of decision-makers.**

## Why should I get involved?

### Your input is important!

The U.S. Department of Education has required the State Department of Education and local school districts to have “meaningful consultation with all of the stakeholder groups” to spend this money, meaning that students, families, and community members all need to be included in the planning.

School districts are also required to reevaluate their ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) plan every six months for the life of ESSER funding (until September 2024). That means even though initial plans for spending were due to the State Department of Education last year, you still have time to get involved, to be a part of the process, and to have your voice heard. It's not too late to help this money have a meaningful impact on student learning and wellbeing.



## How do I find out how much money my district received?

Use the [A+ COVID School Spending Tracker \(policy.aplusala.org/covid-spending\)](https://policy.aplusala.org/covid-spending) to find out where your school district's funds are going. See in-depth instructions on using the tracker [here](#).

## What COVID relief funds are available?

Over \$3.14 billion dollars has come to Alabama schools in three rounds of ESSER funding. These funds must be spent by different deadlines over the next three years.

Funding Name	Alabama Amount	Purpose of Funding
<b>ESSER I</b> from the CARES ACT (passed March 2020)	<b>\$216 million</b>	Immediate needs of schools at the beginning of the pandemic. Must be <i>spent by September 2022</i> .
<b>ESSER II</b> from the CRRSA/CARES 2 (passed December 2020)	<b>\$899 million</b>	Technological needs of schools participating in virtual learning, as well as the needs of those schools transitioning back into the classroom. <i>Must be spent by September 2023</i> .
<b>ARP ESSER III</b> from the American Rescue Plan Act (passed March 2021)	<b>\$2.02 billion</b>	Help bring students back into the classroom, keep them safe, and start recovery from the pandemic, including addressing students' academic, social, and emotional needs. <i>Must be spent by September 2024</i> .

# Now what?

## 1 Get informed.

The first step to having an impact on COVID spending in your school district is being informed. Look at your district's plan to find out how leaders plan to spend their funds. You can use the [A+ COVID School Spending Tracker](#) to find an overview of your district's planned spending.

Next, take time to read the plan submitted by your district. You can find it linked in the COVID School Spending Tracker, or use this blog to learn where to find the plan. For ideas to consider while reading your district's plan, read [How to Read a COVID-Relief Plan](#) from FutureED.

Check out your school district's website for more information on where ESSER funds are going, such as spending reports, press releases, etc. (Hint: look for ESSER content under "Federal Programs" pages or under COVID-related content.)

## 2 Get inspired.

Look through the "Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning" section (page 5) of this toolkit to learn about best practices and possible options for spending COVID relief dollars. Each community will want and/or need different things. Think through the things your child, school, and community need the most. The strategies offered here are all based on research and are offered with Alabama students in mind.

## 3 Get active!

Knowing your district's plan and the strategies you want to see happen are just the first steps. Your school leaders need to hear from you. Think about how you want to take action.



Respond to any surveys or public requests for comment your district has available.



Call or email your local superintendent or other district administrator with your ideas on how to spend COVID relief dollars.



Post on social media about how you think your district should spend COVID relief dollars using the hashtag **#SmartCOVIDSpending**.



Attend local school board meetings to keep up-to-date on how your district is allocating funds.



Speak with your principal or school leader about new programs your child can participate in.



Ask other parents, students, and community members to do the same.



### Looking for more ideas to take action?

Find more ideas about how to take action in the [Your Voice, Your Recovery Playbook](#) from the Southern Economic Advancement Project and in the [Parent Toolkits](#) from the National Parents Union.



# Now what?

## Reaching out to School District Leaders: Examples

Use these examples below to easily reach out to your district leaders or post on social media to get others involved!

Dear [Superintendent or School Board Member],

Sample Email:



My name is [name] and I am a [school district] parent/community member. After much thought and consideration, I believe that our district should [your suggestions] in order to be most effective in recovering our students from pandemic learning loss. I would love to speak further about these ideas and how we can work together for our students.

Thank you,  
[name]

Sample Social  
Media Post



[School district X] is receiving \$X in COVID relief funds from the federal government. Some of that money should go toward [suggestion], which will help our students succeed. Help me contact our leaders to urge them to invest in these strategies! (Link to your district's tracker and any supporting resources)

[#SmartCOVIDSpending](#) [#AplusAdvocates](#)

Sample Twitter  
Post



[X] school district is getting COVID money that should go toward [strategy] to help our students succeed. Help me contact our leaders to urge them to invest in these strategies! [#SmartCOVIDSpending](#)

[#AplusAdvocates](#)



We've also created some graphics you can attach to your post to get more attention! [Click here to download them!](#)

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## What are ways schools can use COVID funding to ensure students are successful?

The following three sections contain research-based strategies that are proven to help students recover from lost classroom time and improve their learning. Each one is approved by the Alabama State Department of Education as an investment for COVID relief funds. Also included are inspiring examples of how school districts are implementing these strategies across our state and nation.



## Section 1: Effective Teaching Practices to Address Learning Loss

### What's in this section?

- 1 High-Impact Tutoring Programs (page 6)**
- 2 High-Quality Summer and Afterschool Programs (page 8 )**
- 3 Using High-Quality Instructional Materials (page 10 )**

#### What is learning loss?

This term is used to describe the amount of classroom time students have missed and how much learning, or academic progress, they may have lost in that time. This happens during long breaks from school like summer break and COVID school closures.



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 1 High-Impact Tutoring Programs

Researchers nationwide agree that high-impact tutoring is by far the most effective way to catch students up.

In fact, it can have a tremendous impact on reading and math outcomes for students. However, according to [an analysis](#) by FutureEd, 26% of sampled Alabama school districts are planning to use tutoring as a means to address learning loss post-pandemic.



**Not all tutoring programs are created equal, so it is important to know and advocate for the features of an impactful tutoring program so students actually benefit.**

**How do you know if a tutoring program is effective? Here are the things to look for:**



**High-Dosage:**

More tutoring more often. Providing tutoring sessions 3 or more times a week for 30 minutes to an hour is significantly more effective than holding sessions once or twice a week. For younger students, shorter, more frequent sessions may be better.



**1-on-1 or Small Groups:**

One-on-one tutoring sessions are the most effective, but for cost-effectiveness, two to three student groups still help students catch up. Groups larger than 4 students have not been found to be effective.



**During the School Day:**

Attendance is key. The most effective tutoring sessions occur during the school day, when students are most likely to attend. Some school systems have used ESSER funding to extend their day by 30 minutes or to rearrange class schedules for tutoring access.



**Consistent, Trained Tutors:**

Teachers and paraprofessional educators make the most effective tutors. However, volunteers, college students, or other school staff can be helpful as long as they are given ongoing training, coaching, and support. It is also critical that students have a consistent tutor throughout their time in the program to build a trusting relationship, which improves attendance and effectiveness.



**High-Quality Instructional Materials:**

Tutors should use instructional materials that work hand-in-hand with what students are learning during regular class time. Materials should also be aligned with state standards. Standards are the information students must know before moving on to the next grade.



**Data-Driven:**

Just like in the classroom, schools need to measure how much students are learning throughout the tutoring program because it allows the tutor to adjust their instruction to meet the students' needs.

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 1 High-Impact Tutoring Programs - RESOURCE PAGE

### What are some examples of High-Impact Tutoring Programs?

#### In Alabama:

- [Piedmont City](#) is providing tutoring for students a year or more behind grade level in Math or English Language Arts as determined by formative and summative assessments at least 3 times per week during the school day, and after-hours teachers are available as well for students that need more support.
- [Marshall County](#) is offering high-dosage tutoring from teachers and instructional assistants after school for small groups of K-12 students, 22 weeks per year, for 3-4 days per week, for 2 hours per day.

#### Nationwide:

- Serve Minnesota has created the [Minnesota Reading Corps, Math Corps, and Early Learning Corps](#), which are Americorps programs that train and place its members as either full or part-time tutors in a school for a year. These programs also become excellent teacher recruitment pipelines.

### Interested in learning more about high-impact tutoring? Check out the following:

- [Read our resource](#) on High-Impact Tutoring.
- Check out resources from the National Student Support Accelerator that explain how to create highly effective tutoring programs, including [a toolkit for tutoring programs](#), a [tutoring database](#) of successful programs nationwide, [and a toolkit for tutoring advocacy](#) (which is geared towards educators, but is a good resource for anyone).
- FutureEd produced a list of [Ingredients for a Successful Tutoring Program](#).
- Read the Education Trust's [State Guidance on High-Impact Tutoring](#).



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 2 High-Quality Summer and Afterschool Programs

Even before COVID, Alabama faced long-standing academic challenges that disproportionately affected Black, Hispanic, rural, and low-income students. Closing achievement gaps will require more instructional time than just the regular school day. This is where high-quality summer and afterschool programs come in. Researchers have found that students who attended high-quality summer programs for 20+ days saw significantly better outcomes in math and reading. In addition, students who attended for two summers outperformed students who did not by up to a 20% difference in both reading and math ([Rand Corp. and Wallace Foundation study](#)).

Every district in the state is required to provide summer and afterschool programs with ESSER funding, so it is important for advocates to focus their efforts on implementation and ensuring that specific programs result in better student outcomes.

**How do you know if a summer and afterschool program is effective? Here are the things to look for:**



### **High-Quality and Aligned Curriculum**

Just like with tutoring, summer and afterschool programs need to use a curriculum that is aligned with the content from the regular school day.



### **Attendance:**

Students will get the most out of the program if they attend consistently. Programs that encourage attendance by making programs mandatory or highly incentivized with a clear attendance policy are the most effective. Program leaders should also address barriers to attendance and participation by considering:

- Full Day Programs: Working parents may not be able to get their students to and from programs that start or end during the work day.
- Enrichment: Summer and afterschool programs are not mandatory, so students need to want to attend. Enrichment is the fun part of summer and afterschool programs that keep students engaged and coming back.
- Transportation: If students cannot get to the program, they cannot participate.



### **Trained Teachers and Staff:**

Summer and afterschool programs that use certified teachers are the most effective. However, if certified teachers are not available, staff members should receive ongoing training and coaching to ensure they are effective.



### **Smaller student groups:**

Students should be in groups of 10-20, as classes with more than 20 students are less effective.

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 2 High-Quality Summer and Afterschool Programs - RESOURCE PAGE

### What are some great examples of high-quality summer and afterschool programs in Alabama?

- [Tuscaloosa City Schools](#) is providing tutoring for students a year or more behind grade level in Math or English language arts as determined by formative and summative assessments at least 3 times per week during the school day, and afterhours teachers are available as well for students that need more support.
- [Perry County Schools](#) will host 6-week summer learning and summer enrichment camps for each summer over the life of ARP ESSER. Transportation for students is provided and professional development for teachers is built in.
- [Oneonta City Schools](#) is providing an afterschool program for grades K-6 that operates 2 hours a day, 5 days a week. In addition to small group instruction on reading, math, science, and social studies, students will receive support in social emotional learning and enrichment activities.
- Alabama students who attend [Summer Adventures in Learning \(SAIL\) programs](#) made average gains of 1.9 months in reading and 2.7 months in math during a 5-6 week program.

### Interested in learning more about effective summer and afterschool programs? Check out the following:

- Read [our proposal](#) and [one-pager](#) on expanding access to high-quality afterschool and summer programs for Alabama students.
- This [brief from The EdTrust](#) talks about using expanded learning time to deal with unfinished learning or learning loss.



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 3 Using High-Quality Instructional Materials

Instructional Materials are the things, like textbooks, lesson and unit plans, and assessments, that teachers use to teach students and assess their learning.

**Research shows that one of the best ways to quickly improve student learning and achievement is to ensure teachers are using high-quality instructional materials to teach their students. In fact, using high-quality instructional materials in a classroom can make a 40 times larger impact on student achievement than reducing class size.**

The great thing about this strategy is that they are a one-time-cost, because once they are purchased, they can be used again and again. This means that districts won't need to continue funding these after the money is gone.

Purchasing high-quality instructional materials is just the first step. It is also critical that districts invest in high-quality, curriculum-based professional development so that teachers learn how to use materials in their classrooms. This is another excellent use of COVID relief funds.



**Not all instructional materials are created equal; some are better than others.**

## How do you know if your school's instructional materials and curriculum are high-quality?

There are non-profit organizations and state departments of education that have dedicated lots of time and effort to reviewing instructional materials and curriculum in order to identify the best for students.



### Step 1

First, ask your teachers for the name of the curriculum they use. Each subject will likely use a different curriculum.

### Step 2

Then, go check out lists of materials that have been proven to work:



- [EdReport's website](#) to access reviews on the most widely used instructional materials and curricula. EdReports gives a green rating to the highest quality materials.
- You can also check out the [Louisiana Department of Education's Tiered Curriculum Reviews](#). Louisiana gives a Tier 1 rating to the highest quality materials.

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 3 Using High-Quality Instructional Materials - RESOURCE PAGE

**Interested in learning more about high-quality instructional materials and curriculum-based professional development? Check out the following:**

- Check out our [Quick Facts](#) and [Brief](#) on why high-quality instructional materials are so important.
- Read more about how Mississippi has invested in high-quality instructional materials at their website, [Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter](#).
- Learn more about the high-quality instructional materials from [EdReports](#).
- Read about [“How States can Promote the Use of High-Quality Curriculum”](#) from Chiefs for Change.



*End of "Section 1: Effective Teaching Practices to Address Learning Loss"*



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning



## Section 2: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments



### What's in this section?

- 4 Providing School-Based Mental Health Services (page 13)**
- 5 Strengthening Relationships between Teachers and Students (page 15)**

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 4 Providing School-Based Mental Health Services

With nearly 1 in 10 youth suffering from severe depression and suicide ranking as the second leading cause of death among adolescents, a national mental health crisis was growing among students even before the pandemic. Now, after three years of disrupted services as well as alienation from friends, students are facing a serious mental health crisis, and schools are struggling to respond. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recently released [new data](#) about the student mental health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, this crisis affects student wellbeing, but it impacts academic achievement as well. It is very difficult to focus on learning when you are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues. There are multiple effective, school-based mental health interventions, such as [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma](#) in Schools and [Bounce Back](#), that have made a significant impact on both the mental health and academic achievement of student participants.

**! Even though student mental health has been a well-documented concern of students, families, and educators, A+ found that Alabama districts are only spending 1.8% of all of the COVID relief funding available on these services.**



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 4 Providing School-Based Mental Health Services - RESOURCE PAGE

**What are some great examples, models, or programs schools can use to provide school-based mental health services?**

### **In Alabama:**

- [Andalusia City Schools](#) is hiring both a Mental Health Coordinator and Mental Health Worker with ARP ESSER funding.
- [Madison County Schools](#) is hiring two social workers and contracting with school-based mental health therapists.

### **Nationwide:**

- Using \$9 million in ESSER funds, [Colorado](#) created a new program called [I Matter Colorado](#), which offers up to six free mental health sessions to students after they complete an online needs assessment.
- [New Jersey](#) has set aside \$30 million of ESSER II funding for a new statewide grant program for districts to contract with mental health providers to support student and teacher mental health.
- [Rhithm](#) is an online wellness assessment tool that collects real-time data on how students are doing so teachers can proactively intervene and connect students to their school-based therapist if necessary.

**Interested in learning more about providing school-based mental health services? Check out the following:**

- The [A+ Student Voices Team](#) surveyed their peers (Alabama high school students) about the most pressing issues they face at school, and mental health was [a clear priority](#) for two school years in a row.
- Check out the [Policy Playbook](#) and [Policy Proposal](#), created by the Birmingham Coalition for Student Mental Health after engaging over 800 students, families, and educators through community conversations and surveys.
- Learn more about how districts can invest COVID relief funding in [evidence-based mental health interventions](#) in this brief from FutureED.
- [The Enrichment Center](#) is a non-profit that provides school-based counseling services for students in North Alabama.

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 5 Strengthening Relationships between Teachers and Students

Relationships between teachers and students are the critical foundation of a school's culture. Students must feel safe and valued at school in order to fully engage in learning. However, the pandemic and events of the last few years have made it incredibly difficult for students and teachers to build and maintain relationships.

Students have experienced anxiety, stress, and, possibly, traumatic events that can make it difficult for them to show up ready to learn at school. In fact, it is estimated that nearly 140,000 children nationwide lost a caregiver during the pandemic. Teachers have also faced unprecedented challenges and stress, as well as additional personal and professional responsibilities that make it difficult to build and maintain meaningful relationships with students.

**Despite these challenges, relationships between students and teachers are incredibly important to getting students back on track and successfully addressing student learning loss.**

District and school leaders must ensure there are resources, time, and support dedicated to this critical work.

*"Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be... no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship."*

Rita Pierson, Educator, & James Comer,  
Professor of Child Psychology at Yale



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 4 Strengthening Relationships between Teachers and Students - RESOURCE PAGE

**What are some great examples, models, or programs that schools can use to strengthen student-teacher relationships?**

### **In Alabama:**

- [Lowndes County](#) is providing training to their staff on being a “trauma informed school,” so educators can support students experiencing adverse childhood experiences or traumatic events.

### **Nationwide:**

- [Building Assets Reducing Risks \(BARR\) Model](#) is an evidence-based, whole-school approach that prioritizes building strong relationships between students and teachers and has demonstrated increased academic outcomes within a year of the model's implementation.
- [SEARCH Institute's REACH Program](#) is evidence-based professional development on how to build relationship-focused schools. Offerings include the [Intentional Relationship Workshop](#).
- [My Teacher Partner](#) is another proven professional development program that trains school leaders in the My Teacher Partner relationship-based coaching model.

**Interested in learning more about strengthening relationships between students and teachers? Check out the following:**

- Watch Rita Pierson's TED Talk on why [“every child deserves a champion”](#).
- Read [this brief](#) from The EdTrust to learn more about the importance of student-teacher relationships and how to build them.

*End of "Section 2: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments"*

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning



## Section 3: Connecting Families and Schools



### What's in this section?

- 6 Meaningful Parent and Family Engagement (page 18)**
- 7 Supporting Student Attendance (page 20)**

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 6 Meaningful Parent and Family Engagement

When schools work together with parents to support student learning, students flourish. Researchers have found that schools that create strong family engagement are ten times more likely to improve student learning outcomes. Students are more likely to attend school regularly, get higher grades, score higher on state tests, and graduate from high school. Meaningful parent and family engagement goes beyond traditional parent involvement. It is all about building trust and partnership between school and home, which research says is most effective when it is led by schools.



**While we know that parent and family engagement is important, Alabama school districts are currently only investing 0.6% of COVID relief funds in engaging parents and families.**

### What does meaningful parent and family engagement look like?



#### **Families are viewed as assets:**

It is critical that parents and families, and their input, are valued. Trust is the most important ingredient in family-school partnerships and it is built by feeling valued and having input taken into account.



#### **Communication is frequent and goes both ways:**

Parents and families are communicated with on a regular basis, including updates on homework and grades. Parents know how to contact their child's teachers and feel comfortable communicating with them.



#### **Parents and families are frequently given opportunities for input:**

Families should be consulted on a regular basis for their input and feedback.



#### **Virtual communication tools are used:**

Researchers from the UChicago Consortium found that [families appreciate the use of virtual communication tools](#) that schools relied on during the pandemic. These virtual tools allow families to communicate more often with teachers and allow more flexibility in scheduling meetings. Researchers have also found that [texting can be an effective way](#) to communicate the importance of attendance to parents and families, which can lead to stronger student attendance.

# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 6 Meaningful Parent and Family Engagement - RESOURCE PAGE

**What are some great examples, models, or programs that schools can use to meaningfully engage families?**

- [Family Educator Learning Accelerator](#) (FELA) is a free program from the [Springboard Collaborative](#), a non-profit with the mission of closing the literacy gap by closing the gap between school and home. The Springboard Collaborative trains teachers and families to work together, set goals, and support reading at home.
- [Talking Points](#) and [Fast Talk](#) are two apps that help teachers communicate with families in their own language.
- [Parent Teacher Home Visits](#) is a nonprofit organization that helps to train school leaders and educators in the best practices of home visits. In addition, COVID relief funds can be used as stipends for educators who do home visits.
- Fort Worth Independent School District hired over [100 Family Engagement Specialists](#) to re-engage students and families. Check out [their presentation](#) on how they decided to spend their COVID relief funding, which includes student, family, and educator survey data.
- Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont and the State Department of Education launched the [Learner Engagement and Attendance Program \(LEAP\)](#), which will hire and train individuals to engage families with the goal of getting students back in school and enrolled in a summer program, as well as connecting families to community resources.
- After welcoming a wave of immigrant families in 2011, Cajon Valley School District in California hired [Bilingual Community Liaisons](#) to engage new families who spoke different languages. The initial effort turned into the nationally recognized Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team, which is guided by the [Family-School Partnership framework](#) designed by Harvard Researcher, Dr. Karen Mapp.

**Interested in learning more about meaningful family engagement?**

**Check out the following:**

- Learn more about [lessons learned from the pandemic about improving school and family communication](#) from the UChicago Consortium.
- Check out [this blog post from EdReport](#) on ways to engage families around student learning.
- Read more from FutureED in the blog, [The Case for Closer Home-School Connections Post COVID](#).
- Interested in a Global perspective? Check out this report from Brookings Institute, [Collaborating To Transform And Improve Education Systems: A Playbook for Family-School Engagement](#).



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 7 Supporting Student Attendance

In order to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that students are attending school.

[Getting students back in school](#) has been a tremendous challenge for school leaders, as chronic absenteeism has increased dramatically during the pandemic. Removing barriers for students is one of the most important ways schools can help support student attendance. Low income students may have more barriers preventing them from attending school, like not having access to healthcare, transportation, or consistent meals. There are some innovative ways that district leaders can utilize COVID relief funds to work with families to understand and address the root causes of chronic absenteeism to get students back in school and on track.



**Chronic absenteeism (missing 18 or more school days in a year) can have devastating effects on a student's learning. Students who are chronically absent score 5% lower on average than their peers on standardized tests in math and reading.**



# Effective Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

## 6 Supporting Student Attendance- RESOURCE PAGE

**What are some great examples, models, or programs that schools can use to support student attendance and integrate student supports?**

- [Communities in Schools](#) (CIS) is a nonprofit organization that helps to “surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.” CIS partners with schools nationwide.
- [Success Planning](#) from Harvard’s EdRedesign Lab is a program that ensures every child has a caring adult, called a Navigator, who helps them to succeed and to remove out-of-school learning barriers. [Read more here](#) about how to set up a Navigator program in your district.
- [Community Schools](#) is an evidence-based school improvement model based on four pillars: 1) Integrated Student Supports; 2) Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities; 3) Active Family and Community Engagement; and 4) Collaborative Leadership and Practices. The community school model has shown to increase outcomes for students and their families, including attendance, family stability, and academic growth. To learn more about how districts can use COVID relief for community schools, [check out this guidance](#) from the U.S. Department of Education.

**Interested in learning more about supporting student attendance or integrating student supports? Check out the following:**

- Check out [Coalition for Community Schools](#) to learn more about this evidence-based school improvement model.
- Learn more about effective COVID recovery strategies for [student support](#), [mentoring](#), and [combating chronic absenteeism](#) from FutureED.
- Check out [this toolkit from Attendance Works](#) that promotes COVID-19 recovery through attendance at school.

*End of "Section 3: Connecting Families and Schools"*



A+ drives improvements in public education for every Alabama student. We set and deliver high expectations by advocating for policies, practices, and investments that advance learning and by partnering with schools to build the capacity of teachers and leaders.

Written by: Corinn O'Brien, Vice President of Policy, and Charity Gardner, Policy Manager

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