Funding and Budgets to Support Learning Beyond COVID-19
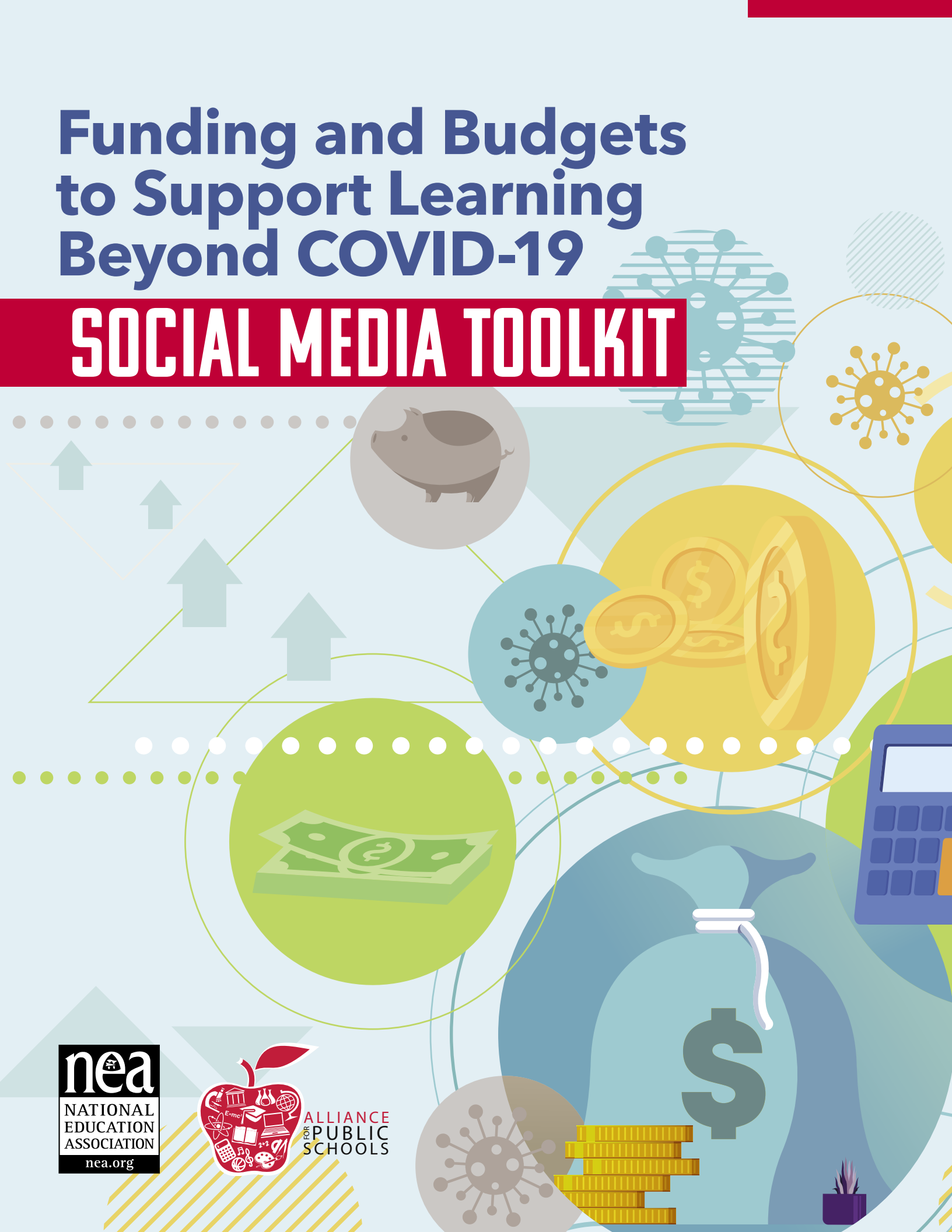
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

WHY THIS MATTERS

The National Education Association (NEA) and the Alliance for Public Schools (APS) created this toolkit to elevate the resources our schools need to place all students–across race and ZIP code–on the path to success.

With the passing of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), schools and districts across the country have an opportunity to secure critical education funds. As educators, we must identify, prioritize, and advocate for the unique needs of our students and school communities.

Over the past year, schools have been forced to reallocate funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in an effort to limit disruptions to student learning. Existing funds from already tight budgets were used to purchase laptops for virtual learners, outfit school buses with Wi-Fi, upgrade facilities to address safety concerns, and purchase cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). As a result, schools have faced and continue to face deficits.

In 2020, Congress responded by passing two pieces of legislation: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) in March and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act) in December. Although, this legislation allocated approximately $54.3 billion to PreK–12 education, it was not nearly enough to help our schools recover.

In March 2021, Congress passed ARPA, bringing the total amount of aid up to $190 billion. For schools to secure this additional funding, districts must publish a plan on how they will use the funds to support safe in-person learning and how they will address COVID-related opportunity gaps. Each district is required to seek public comment on their plans; because our educators and families are best positioned to know what students need, we must ensure consultation with families, students, and educators and their unions is an essential step in this process.

It is critical that we raise our collective voice to identify the resources, supplies, and supports that are sorely needed for our students to grow and thrive. For example, we must work together to guarantee every school has a school counselor, nurse, and psychologist on staff, and every school has a functioning HVAC system, appropriate education technology and devices, and afterschool programs.

This toolkit will help you communicate with your education stakeholders, including families, fellow educators, business partners, and community members. It contains information, messaging, and graphics that you can use to:

▶ **Increase awareness** about public education funding;

▶ **Drive urgency** by illustrating the unprecedented needs that have been created or exacerbated by COVID-19;

▶ **Amplify your voice** and advocate on behalf of your students;

▶ **Advocate for essential resources** to support all students across race and place–particularly, Native students and students of color–who have been negatively impacted by this crisis; and

▶ **Provide facts and messaging** from trusted resourced.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit will help you raise awareness about student needs and priorities and build momentum and a unified call for districts to take action and use ARPA funds to address these critical needs.

Here are just a few ways you can use this guide:

▶ Create content for your social media channels that include the funding facts and sample graphics, and urge members to share your posts.

▶ Build collaboration and urgency by using hashtags and tagging community leaders and partners.

▶ Tag elected officials in posts, when appropriate.

▶ Track your campaign metrics to analyze the effectiveness of your efforts.

Encourage all of your members and community partners to share your content on their own social media platforms to elevate your message.

If you need assistance or have questions, please reach out to the Alliance for Public Schools at info@all4schools.org and the NEA at acastanon@nea.org.

Make sure to follow the National Education Association and the Alliance for Public Schools on social media! Tag us and share your work.

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SOCIAL MEDIA 101

If your organization is new to social media, don't be overwhelmed.

Follow these simple steps to open a whole new world of engagement with your members and your community.

1. Select your platform(s).

Having a social media presence does not mean having an account on every social media app. Find out what platforms your members and partners use most and start with those. Once you select a platform, be active, and make sure you engage regularly.

2. Create content.

Once you select a platform, spend time building your account profile. Include a profile picture, your website, and contact information.

Then, you're all set to start creating content. Post regularly. This can be as simple as posting a status update. And if you don't have an update, you can also find content to share. For example, share relevant education news stories or posts from your partners and stakeholders. The goal is to stay active and engage regularly. We recommend posting a minimum of four posts per week.

Above all, make sure your content is eye-catching. Attach visual images or videos with your post. Remember to post photos of your events, activities, and your members. Use headlines that make followers want to click, share, and like.
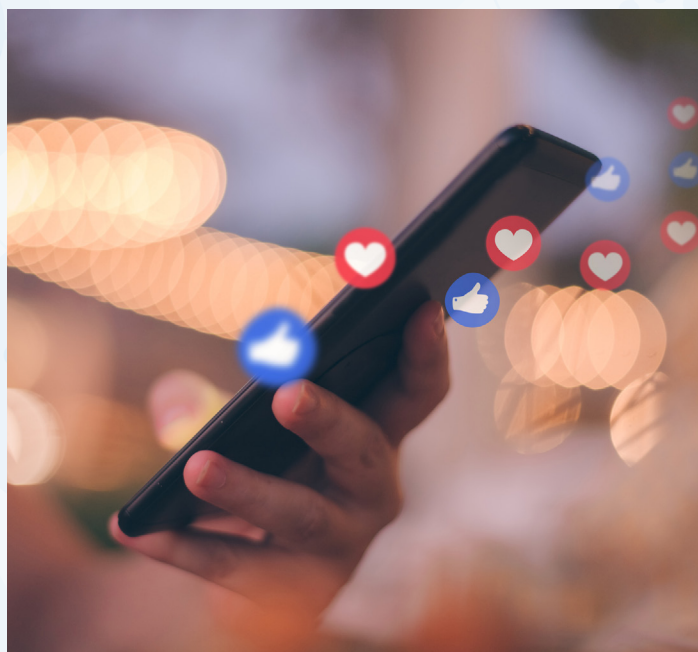
3. Build connections.

By proactively engaging and interacting on social platforms, you increase the visibility of your own content. Follow and connect with your community partners and organizations that also support educators and students as well as other stakeholders in your community and network. Watch how they use their social media to amplify their messaging.

You can also promote your platform to your members, your friends, and your community; then ask them to share it with their friends.

EDUCATION AND FUNDING FACTS

Use these facts and resources to inform your members, partners, and all public school stakeholders about the state of education funding today.

Student Health and Wellness

According to the National Association of School Nurses, only about 40 percent of all U.S. schools have a full-time nurse on staff.

In 2017, the National Survey on Children's Health reported that nearly 47 percent of all children in the United States have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience—such as abuse or neglect, the death of a parent, or a witness to violence.

The National Center for Health Statistics found suicide was the second leading cause of death in children 10 to 14 years old.

In 2020, the National Center for Homeless Education reported that the number of enrolled students who have experienced homelessness at some point during the last three school years has increased to more than 1.5 million.

School Facilities

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than half of public school buildings are more than 50 years old.

The Government Accountability Office found more than half of public school facilities need significant repairs or replacements of multiple systems.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nearly half of public schools have poor indoor air quality due to cockroaches, rodents, dust mites, fungi, and respiratory irritants.

Technology

NEA research revealed that an estimated 25 percent of all school-aged children live in households without broadband access or a web-enabled device (such as a computer or tablet).

School-aged children in households that are below the federal poverty threshold are much less likely than those above to have access to both broadband and a computer, according to the NEA Report on Digital Equity for Students and Educators.

NEA research showed that only 50 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native children have access to both broadband and a computer.

Funding

According to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), state and local services suffered under the Great Recession and were never restored in the period of growth that followed, leaving schools weakened after a decade of neglect. From 2009–2011, budget cuts led to 34 states reducing K–12 education expenditures. Additional cuts came in the years that followed, despite economic growth, undermining our ability to respond effectively to the pandemic.

The [Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) reported that due to COVID-19, districts have experienced decreasing revenues and increasing costs. Districts rely heavily on state revenues for their funding and revenue from sales and income taxes were negatively impacted by COVID. Further, districts had to purchase laptops and incurred costs related to implementing social distancing safety measures.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), costs associated with minimizing risks of COVID-19 range from $55 (materials and consumables only) to $442 (materials and consumables, additional custodial staff members, and potential additional transportation) per student.

ARPA funds can be used to help address issues created or exacerbated by COVID-19. Funds can be used toward the following:

▶ Additional school personnel

▶ Learning recovery, summer school, and afterschool programs

▶ Unique needs of students from low-income families, children with disabilities, English language learners, Native students and students of color, children experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth

▶ Mental health services and supports

▶ Activities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Career and Technical Education Act, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

▶ Education technology

▶ Preparedness and response, coordination with public health departments, public health protocols, and long-term closures

▶ Sanitation supplies, PPE, and staff training on sanitation and prevention

▶ Indoor air quality and school facility repairs and improvements

You can also customize your social media posts with school budget data specific to your state and local community. Check out [state-by-state fact sheets on the NEA website](#).

KEY MESSAGES

When you begin to craft your key messages, make sure to home in on the specific talking points that clearly support your position.

Then, search for relevant hashtags and, if appropriate, tag the accounts of your members, partners, and elected officials to spread the word.

Talking Points

Increase the chances of your audience clearly understanding your issues and positions by using effective and concise talking points in your messaging:

▶ Students will need more one-on-one time with their teachers. Districts can help close opportunity gaps by hiring additional teachers.

▶ Many students will be starting the new school year with additional needs. We must demand ARPA funds are used to retain existing and hire additional staff so that our students have the resources and support to grow and thrive.

▶ Many families and students endured job losses, food insecurity, and trauma. We must demand that district policymakers use ARPA funds to address our students' rising mental health needs. Every school must have a full-time nurse, counselor, and psychologist.

▶ Virtual learning didn't work for everyone. As a result, millions of students lost critical instructional time. We must insist district policymakers use ARPA funds for extended learning time, including afterschool programs, tutoring, summer school, Saturday academies, and year-round school.

▶ Our students and educators are stronger when they have a network of support. We must tell district leaders to use ARPA funds to hire specialists—such as therapists, counselors, and speech-language pathologists—to ensure every student's social, emotional, and academic needs are met.

▶ Students deserve schools that take a holistic approach to student learning. It's time for policymakers to transform traditional schools into community schools that prioritize student health, well-being, and academic success.

Hashtags

By including hashtags in your social media posts, you make the content searchable by others. Consider including the following popular hashtags:

#AmericanRescuePlan	#ReopeningSchools
#BackToSchool	#RebuildAmericasSchools
#COVID19	#StrongPublicSchools

Tagging to Spread the Word

Social media can amplify your message and help you engage current and future supporters. Tag your members and key partners in your posts to ensure your advocacy efforts are heard, and ask them to help spread the word. However, only tag your partners when the content is relevant to avoid annoying them.

Public and government officials also use social media to communicate. When appropriate, tagging an elected official can help draw attention to the issue and your advocacy efforts. A general rule of thumb is that about 20 messages on a topic are needed for a member to take note (specifically, for senators). The more organizations can get their members to tweet organically, rather than just post canned messages, the better.

FACEBOOK

Use your key messages and funding facts to create compelling posts about the pandemic's impact on your schools or copy the sample posts below. Find a file of graphics sized for Facebook and additional sample posts in the Family and Community Engagement EdCommunities group.

Sample Posts

Our teachers are stronger when they have a network of support. We must insist district leaders use ARPA funds to hire specialists—such as therapists, counselors, and speech-language pathologists—to ensure every student's social, emotional, and academic needs are met.
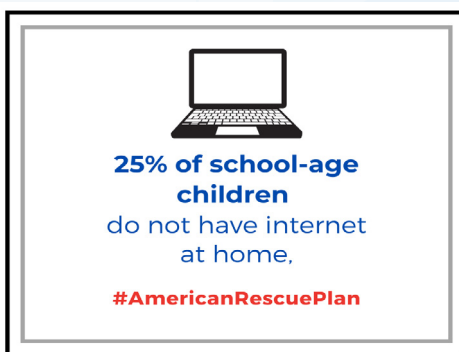
Every student across race and ZIP code deserves a well-rounded education that includes academics, the arts, and social-emotional learning. We must demand that policymakers use ARPA funds toward additional school personnel and extended learning opportunities like afterschool programs and summer school.

Technology is central to education. Yet, certain politicians have ignored the essential needs of schools and children from under-resourced communities. Collectively, we can make a difference. We must come together and demand ARPA funds be used to ensure every student has reliable broadband internet and web-enabled devices.

Community schools provide rich academic environments and wraparound supports that include physical and mental health services for students. This strategy to transform our schools can be supported by American Rescue Plan relief funds.

Early childhood education fosters opportunities for children to discover new experiences, new friends, and new environments; however, COVID-19 drove many early childhood centers to shut down and never reopen. We must advocate for American Rescue Plan dollars to fund early childhood education and programs. The time to invest is now.

Sample Post Graphics

25% of school-age children
do not have internet at home,

#AmericanRescuePlan

SUPPORT OUR EDUCATION WORKFORCE

#AmericanRescuePlan

GIVE STUDENTS THE SUPPORT THEY DESERVE

#AmericanRescuePlan

TWITTER

Tweets must be less than 280 characters, so it is important to use concise language to make your point. Use the sample tweets below and attach Twitter graphics from the Family and Community Engagement EdCommunities group.

Sample Posts

Every child across race and place deserves a roof over their head. We must demand #AmericanRescuePlan funds be used for support services at schools for unhoused students and their families.

The number of unhoused families is increasing. We can make sure our unhoused students have the support and resources they need to stay on track at school by using #AmericanRescuePlan funds to hire additional staff to focus on this growing population.

Students benefit from programs like early childhood education, advanced coursework, and career and technical education. We must dedicate #AmericanRescuePlan dollars to help build the programs in schools that promote student growth and learning.

Every student has the right to a safe, healthy, and just learning environment. For too long, certain policymakers have ignored the dire need to upgrade school facilities in disrepair. We must demand #AmericanRescuePlan funds be used to upgrade HVAC systems and modify facilities.

We all want to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Use #AmericanRescuePlan funds to address the mental health needs of our children and school communities. We demand #aNurseForEverySchool and more #schoolcounselors to help students.

Broadband internet is essential to 21st-century education. Dedicate #AmericanRescuePlan dollars to expand broadband access and provide all students across race and place with web-enabled devices. All students have the right to learn, grow, and thrive.

Sample Post Graphics

FUND HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
#AmericanRescuePlan

INVEST IN SAFE AND HEALTHY CLASSROOMS
#AmericanRescuePlan

INSTAGRAM

Instagram permits you to use multiple images in a single post to create a message series; however, the platform does not allow you to hyperlink directly from your posts. To add a link to your website or to the NEA website, be sure to add it in the bio section of your profile so that followers can learn more or take action. Don't forget: You can also use Instagram Stories to engage your followers.

For examples of Instagram posts and graphics, visit the Family and Community Engagement EdCommunities group.

Sample Posts

When we get #BackToSchool we can make sure every student has a web-enabled laptop or tablet. Tell your district policymakers to use #AmericanRescuePlan funds to pay for education technology in your school.

Early childhood education builds a solid foundation for lifelong learning; however, COVID-19 drove many early childhood centers to shut down and never reopen their doors. We must demand our district policymakers use #AmericanRescuePlan dollars to fund early childhood education and programs.

Every student deserves equal access to educational opportunities. We must use #AmericanRescuePlan dollars to support students with disabilities to ensure they receive the evaluations and services they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

#SummerLearning is more important than ever. We must use #AmericanRescuePlan funds to #InvestInChildren this summer. #BackToSchool

Sample Post Graphics

RELIEF FUNDS ARE HEADED TO SCHOOLS

Here's what you need to know

State tax revenues, used to pay for schools, declined due to covid-19.

Congress passed the American Rescue Plan to send much needed funds to schools.

States and districts are deciding how to use these funds.

Tell your leaders what supports your schools need.

#AmericanRescuePlan

VIDEO

Video can be used across social media platforms to grab your followers' attention. Long format videos, like interviews or recorded events, can be housed on your YouTube channel and shared to your other social media platforms; longer videos can be a great way to engage your audience on a deeper level and to explain complex issues.

Short video clips can be uploaded as Facebook posts or Facebook Stories. Instagram is also well-suited for video content. Instagram Stories allows 15-second video clips; longer videos will automatically be formatted into consecutive 15-second sections. Videos are less common on Twitter, but short 30-second videos may help illustrate your message.

Here are some examples of how you can use video to engage your members and community stakeholders:

▶ Have affiliate leaders speak directly to their members and partners. Use these video messages to inform or to inspire action.

▶ Ask members and partners to post video clips of themselves promoting your campaign messaging and holding signs using your hashtag.

▶ Use video to tell your story. For example, you can use this feature to illustrate the importance of appropriate PPE, show the equipment that is required, or give a tour of a socially distanced classroom.
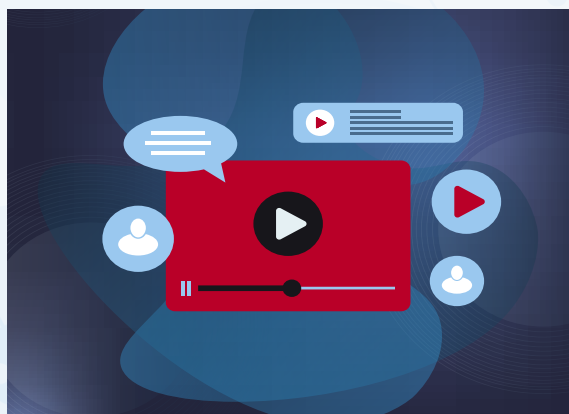
MEASURING FOR SUCCESS

It is important to track the effectiveness of your efforts.

Patterns may emerge that will help you in future social media campaigns and communications. Monitor the results to help determine the types of posts and messages that are most engaging to your audience as you plan future content.

You can find the Social Media Metrics spreadsheet on the Family and Community Engagement EdCommunities group. It is available for download and you can customize it for your needs.

You also may want to customize the spreadsheet to include:

▶ Unique website page visits;

▶ Number of new email addresses or phone numbers captured;

▶ Likes/shares/retweets/comments/follows on social media; or

▶ Number of community partners engaged as supporters.

A TOOL YOU CAN USE

You do not have to hire a graphic designer to create original social media content.

Canva is an inexpensive graphic design platform used to create professional-looking social media content. Use Canva to customize the graphics we have provided or customize their ready-made templates. Find numerous how-to videos on YouTube to help you learn this useful tool. Learn more at canva.com.

Find all of the social media graphics for each platform and the Social Media Metrics spreadsheet in the Family and Community Engagement EdCommunities group.

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