

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN SPENDING PRIORITIES: SURVEY RESULTS



Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

APRIL 28, 2021

From March 19<sup>th</sup> through April 25<sup>th</sup>, the PFT, in partnership with the Fund Our Facilities Coalition, issued a survey to identify issues of top priority in the allocation of the American Rescue Plan funding.

With the School District of Philadelphia set to receive more than \$1 Billion in one time funding, it is imperative that community input be incorporated into the spending plan. Over 4,600 respondents completed the survey, with a vast majority of the respondents being PFT members. Their insight, as well as the insight of parents, students, and community members is invaluable.

The questions were structured as follows:

- A general question identifying any/all issues of priority for spending
- Three questions in which respondents indicated their top three spending priorities
- A question specific to facilities and the investments needed
- Open ended feedback
- Identifying information

The top three priorities identified by respondents are the following:

**Facilities remediation and/or modernization**

**Mental health supports for students (ex: in school groups, out of school programs)**

**Classroom supplies (books, technology)**

The full results follow.

**Section 1: Overall Priorities**

Which of the following support staff/programs do our students and educators need as we deal with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis? *(Select all that apply)*

This question was to gauge an overall view of importance resources. The top priorities are broken down in subsequent questions.

**Total respondents: 4,605**

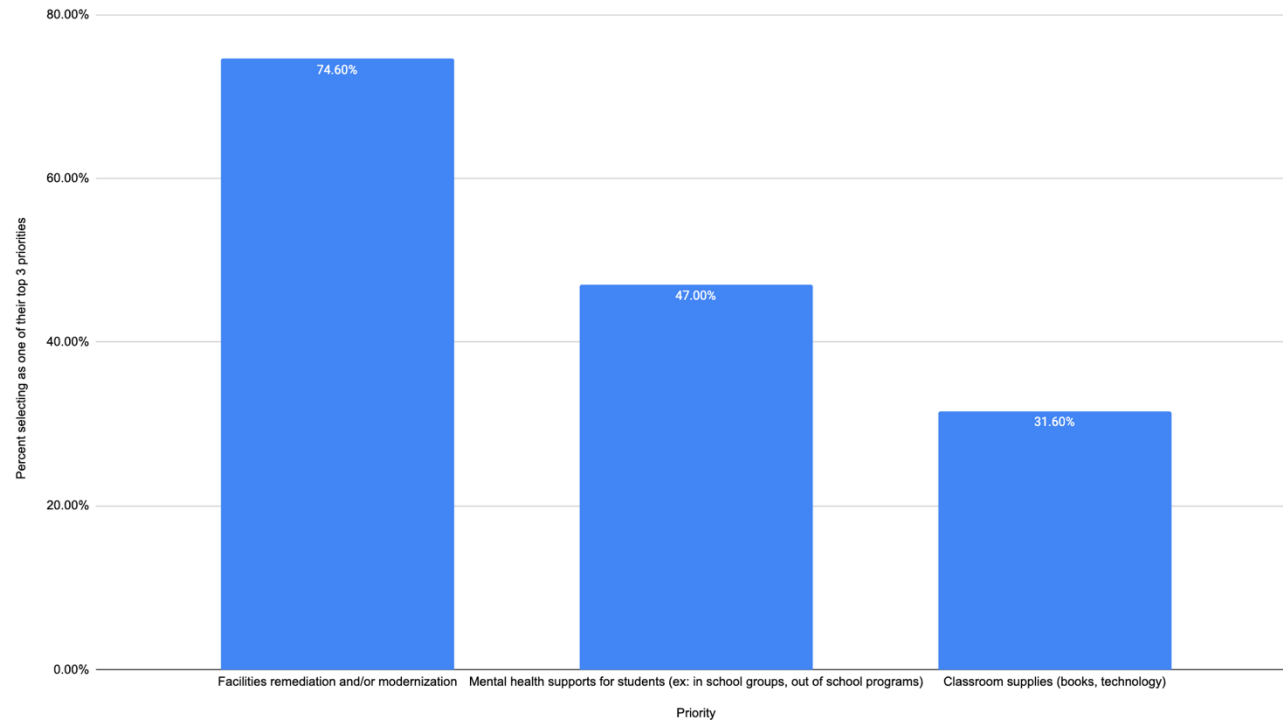
Resource	Number	Percent
Facilities remediation and/or modernization	3718	80.7
Mental health supports for students (ex: in school groups, out of school programs)	2988	64.9
Classroom supplies (books, technology)	2611	56.7
Technology for educators/school staff	2488	53.2
Tutoring/other 'extra' academic opportunities during the year (ex: additional staff for small group instruction, before/after school programs)	2411	52.4
Support services for parents/community (homework help, etc.)	1945	42.2
Extracurricular programming/staff & arts programming- field trips, etc.	1936	42.0
At home technology support for students (new/updated computers, internet access)	1904	41.3
Summer enrichment programming (arts, camps, etc.)	1445	31.4
Summer academic opportunities	1320	28.7
Language access support for families	1319	28.6
Professional development	937	20.3
Other	168	3.6

**Section 2: Top 3 Priorities**

Respondents were asked to select their top three priorities for investments

Resource	Priority one	Priority two	Priority three	Total
Facilities remediation and/or modernization	2441	627	368	3436
Mental health supports for students (ex: in school groups, out of school programs)	631	875	660	2166
Classroom supplies (books, technology)	269	648	537	1454
Tutoring/other 'extra' academic opportunities during the year (ex: additional staff for small group instruction, before/after school programs)	361	536	537	1434
Technology for educators/school staff	210	508	549	1267
Extracurricular programming/staff & arts programming- field trips, etc.	114	325	441	880
At home technology support for students (new/updated computers, internet access)	134	318	362	814
Support services for parents/community (homework help, etc.)	66	168	336	570
Summer enrichment programming (arts, camps, etc.)	61	183	260	504
Summer academic opportunities	106	177	187	470
Language access support for families	22	58	127	207
Professional development	22	68	106	196
Other	168	114	117	399

Top 3 Priorities for Investment [Respondents selected 3 items; total % does not equal 100]



**Top Three Priority Issues**

Priority	%
<b>Facilities remediation and/or modernization</b>	74.6%
<b>Mental health supports for students (ex: in school groups, out of school programs)</b>	47.0%
<b>Classroom supplies (books, technology)</b>	31.6%

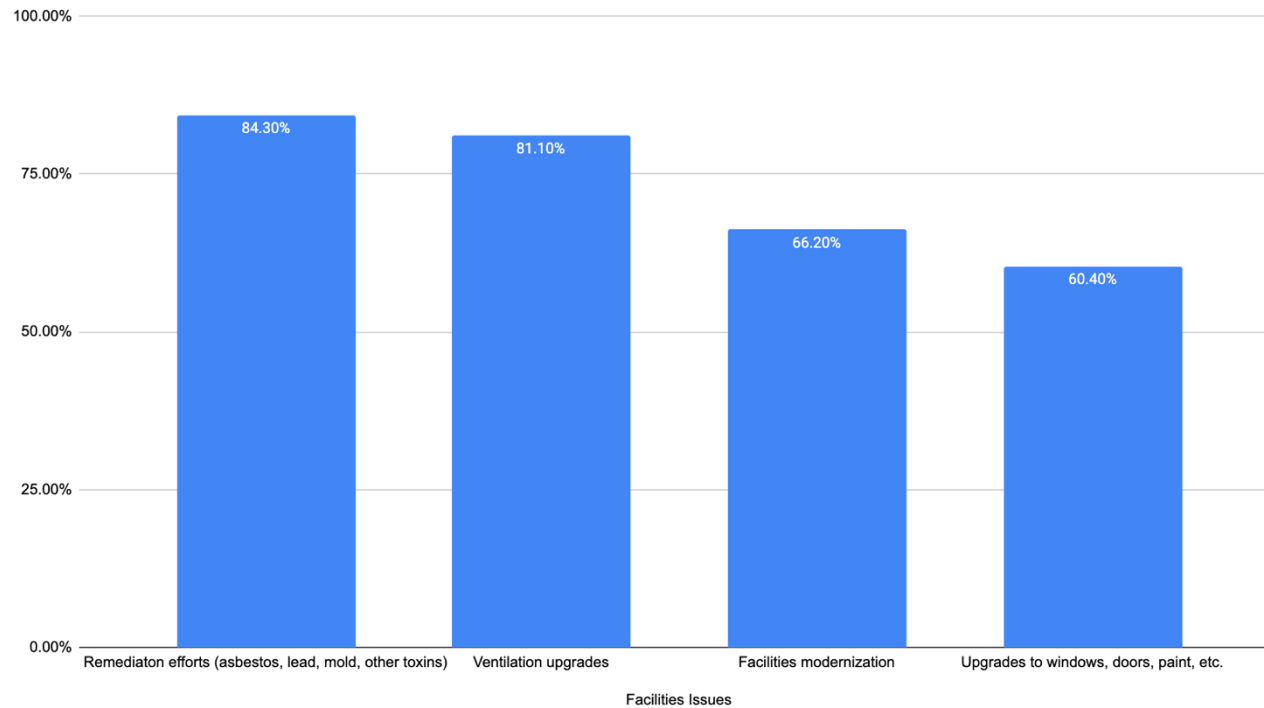
*\*Close fourth was Tutoring/other 'extra' academic opportunities during the year (ex: additional staff for small group instruction, before/after school programs) with 31.0% including it in their top 3 priorities.*

Section 3: Facilities Specific Question

Respondents were asked which facilities items were of concern to them (and were able to select all that apply):

Remediation efforts (asbestos, lead, mold, other toxins)	84.30%
Ventilation upgrades	81.10%
Facilities modernization	66.20%
Upgrades to windows, doors, paint, etc.	60.40%

What facilities issues are important to you?



**Section 4: Open Feedback**

Below is a sampling of the open ended feedback. While we worked to compile a representative sampling, not all items listed were necessarily frequently mentioned.

Two items of note:

- One of the most frequent additional suggestions was the addition of usable, inviting outside space for students, including playgrounds.
- Additionally, many respondents included requests for smaller class sizes and additional staff. These are emblematic of the significance of not allowing the ARP funding to be the only additional investments in our schools. We need recurring investments at the city, state, and federal level to ensure that we can provide appropriate staffing levels and lower class sizes and lower student/staff ratios for counselors, nurses, and other service providers.

A one-time investment in improving ventilation and temperature control will improve student's lives permanently, and prevent future outbreaks of many illnesses.
After facilities remediation, I believe the most important things to help our students heal from this pandemic is extracurricular and in-school art, theater, sports, clubs etc. programming. Creative outlets and the opportunity to do things they enjoy will be critical for mental health and recovery. With the \$1B, I believe we should try our best to ensure that schools can use part of that budget for programs that are typically the first to be cut.
After school sports.
All elementary schools should have playgrounds. All outdoor play areas in all schools should have paint lines for courts, nets for hoops, etc.
All money should be spent on modernizing schools and replacing chrome books in classrooms.
All should be provided with opportunities within the arts/technology sector... hopefully some can get apprenticeships as Phila comes along in the green technology fields
Anti-racism training for all staff
Any opportunity for the students to be social with one another. They have missed being with other children for over a year.
Attendance support programs.
Because this money is not stimulus and not something the district can count on in the future, it is imperative that it is used in a way that benefits the entire district in a way that modernizes school for the future. We will never have a chance again to make right the facilities issues that so profoundly affect the educational environments our students deserve. A child's zip code should not dictate the very basic ventilation needs of the facility the student must learn in. This has gone ignored far too long and must be made right once and for all.
Better choices in the food we serve our students.
BLACK HISTORY, phonics, handwriting, typewriting skills, BLACK HISTORY, and creative writing

Building modernization will have the greatest long-term impact on those we serve. Obviously, it won't solve all facilities problems in all buildings but it will go a long way to showing underserved PHL communities that local and federal government can function to the betterment of specific communities. Needs to be accompanied by intensive and thoughtful community outreach. Covid "slide" also needs specific attention.
Conflict resolution and mediation.
Conflict resolution, anti-gun program
Connections with community programs surrounding grief, community violence, social emotional learning, empowerment
Counseling groups facilitated by SDP School Counselors as part of any summer programming in order to address the grief and trauma experienced by many of our students.
Deaf and hard of hearing classes need special consideration during hybrid. Students can't be far from sign language. They need clear masks. They can't hear classmates who are virtual and need to see their ASL.
District wide racial equity curriculum; end to high stakes standardized testing
Do something that improves the day.
Drivers Education offered for all high-schoolers to give them something to look forward to. Social Skills for elementary and middle schools.
EC programs away from the computer screen, not necessarily sports which I am a huge advocate for, but programs where students can socialize and have fun!!
ESOL and Special education services need actual learning spaces. We have a high percentage of special education students and ESOL students and their needs are not being met like the regular education students.
Faster turnaround on supports for young students, particularly SIS and other behavior supports.
Food programs, housing, after school programs, grants, community involvement
Healthy environment will be #1. Increased mental health professionals are also a high priority need.
Hold the district more accountable with spending. Put the money into our schools and children in ways that will actually benefit them.
This is an opportunity for us to be able to make huge gains in remediating some of the critical facilities issues that present significant health concerns for our staff and students, in addition to an opportunity to provide our students some of the same CRITICAL basics that are standard in other areas, such as clean and functional outdoor play spaces.
I feel the mental health aspect is extremely important, however if students had safe building to go to that were welcoming environments that they could take pride in, maybe the mental health of students would improve by taking pride in their home away from home. I am fortunate to be part of a school environment where students are taking pride in the amazing upgrades that are happening and their morale is rising by the day.
I haven't seen a "learning regression" but I have seen students feel more uncertain and less confident. They desperately need space to talk to their peers and to have some mental health help.
I see mental health supports for students as an essential component in helping families deal with the aftermath of COVID
A critical piece of our SEL [social emotional learning] program needs to include outdoor playgrounds for our students, and I would advocate for these for each of our elementary schools. Our students need a place to play and practice the social skills that they learn inside our classrooms. This is not a trivial idea and I would recommend the book, "Games We Should Play in School" by Frank Aycox. It has an explanation of the reasons why play is so



<p>important for healthy child development. Our students deserve to have positive outlets where they can expend their boundless energy while at the same time learn and practice how to agree and disagree, among many other social skills, without serious consequences.</p>
<p>Art programs and after school programs will do a lot to bolster mental health in our students.</p>
<p>It critical this summer, more than ever, to provide our schoolchildren access to enrichment experiences such as art, drama, music and camps. These kinds of experiences, for far too long, have been viewed as "extras" for underserved communities, when they are necessary and beneficial over the long term for a child's social and emotional well-being, for building confidence that will extend into other areas of their life and expanding their life experiences, so they can imagine all the possibilities they have. I cannot say strongly enough how much I advocate for those making the decisions to consider that, now more than ever, let's allow our schoolchildren to experience joy, childhood and positive experiences after what has been and continues to be an extremely stressful year. I say this, having read, and encouraging those who will make the decisions, to read the research about the effects of the social isolation, stress and trauma, and disruption of life on our children. Let's not decide to put them in unairconditioned schools, working on Chromebooks, staring at a screen, disengaged, let's truly enrich their young lives - because it is through these kinds of experiences that we truly grow and develop! Thank You!</p>
<p>I think more BCAs and translators for school communications. Also, mental health services in languages other than English.</p>
<p>I think more opportunities for student support during the day and after school. Programs to support mental health and socialization since they have been gone for so long. such as Playworks, Arts and Drama programs in elementary. Tutoring to fill the gaps.</p>
<p>A fleshed out social studies curriculum. I have spent a year of digital learning with NO resources provided simply because we are not a state tested subject.</p>
<p>A more updated facility for my kids. At least one sensory room for special needs kids.</p>
<p>Equity in all SDP schools for all students. My school has a very large complex needs population with few resources to address domains being taught. Yet I've seen other SDP schools with classrooms designed and fully set up to accommodate all life skills domains.</p>
<p>I'm sure there are many more things that can be done in our schools. I'm not an education professional and hesitate to weigh in on how instructional, training, or school supply money should be spent, although I would tend to think that more counselors and fewer technology solutions are merited. I am a building design professional, and the current state of our facilities is shameful and appalling. This is not a complicated problem, it just requires abundant resources to repair the buildings and a prioritization list geared towards equity rather than which school community is the loudest or raises the most money on their own. It's both a fundamental need and an expression of respect for our students.</p>
<p>In school learning five days a week!</p>
<p>In school mentoring to address the violence in our communities</p>
<p>In school tutoring, college prep, trade school partners</p>
<p>Infrastructure only</p>
<p>Job opportunities. Real-world exposure to job options.</p>
<p>Just more support overall and cleanliness.</p>
<p>Less spending at the top. More spending at the bottom for staff and students.</p>
<p>Life skills/Extracurricular Activities/Arts/Drama Club</p>

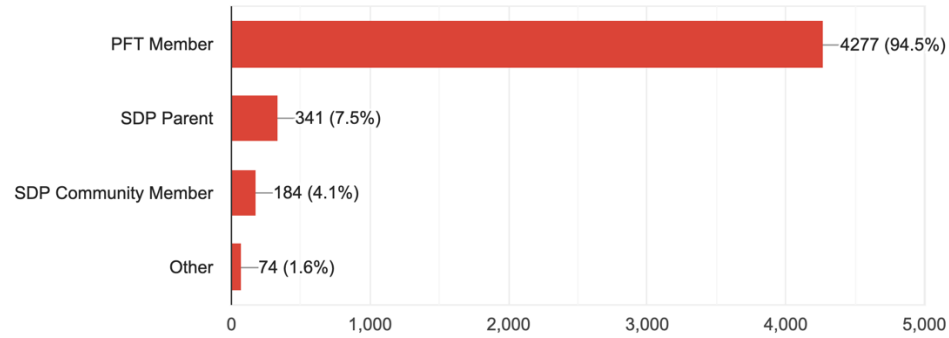
Make schools more student centered and enjoyable. Bring libraries into each school. Hire more African American teachers. Yes, that includes Black Men. Value the input of Retired Teachers.
Make sure they get plenty of food or a food pantry in the school so parents are welcome to come and feed their kids
Maybe we can try to make school not only a place to learn but also a place to feel safe and have some fun too. Some bright colorful paint, new clean floors, game and equipment for recess better quality food for lunch. Also some sensory rooms for our autistic and emotional students. A safe place where they can have their sensory needs met when needed.
Meditation or Mindfulness Programs need to be implemented at all SDP schools....PreK thru 12th grade.
Mental health services are critical, but only if the agencies are vetted for fidelity and have a history of efficacy.
Mental health services must be school-district based and NOT outsourced and must NOT be funded through students' health insurances. In the past, a lot of our students could not receive mental health services (STS) because they did not have the correct health insurance.
Mentoring programs are desperately needed in schools.
Modernization of supplies. Like digital textbook access instead of hard copy etc. if we have one to one tech we need to be able to access it all school day - so upgrading electric in all rooms to allow laptops to be plugged in etc.
More art and creative opportunities
More diverse staff and more trainings on systemic racism. Male Mentoring Programs.
Musical instruments for CIMT teachers
My first option is to allocate the funds for remediation and modernization of the facilities, in order to provide a safe and secure learning environment for the students and staff. The students should be the top beneficial primarily. For this, I strongly suggest and believe students are in desperate need of more mental health support inside of schools. Currently, school counselors are overloaded with supporting students. Mental health services are desperately needed for students outside of school, as well as, inside of school. Students need groups and other mental health professionals to talk with in a safe environment.
Need additional nursing support to complete mandated health screenings and COVID testing on all students along with meeting the healthcare needs of student population. This is very difficult to accomplish in a time efficient manner in a larger school where there is only one full-time nurse
Need more before and after school care in schools for the working parents
One on one reading and phonics assistance in the classrooms will be extremely helpful.
Opportunities to involve parents in their child's education.
Organized recess, outdoor eating areas, community projects like or gardens.
Our kids need access to ALL THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES as children in the wealthier/wealthiest districts. Primary among them is SMALLER CLASS SIZES. I just can't understand why we STILL squeeze our babies into classrooms of 30 with one teacher and expect to have a solid academic outcome just because we throw academics all day. Follow the research...
Parent trainings on how to best support their school age children.
Parental support, before and after school programs
PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS ONLY - these are 1 time funds and should not be used on any non-renewable efforts.

Playgrounds. Adapted equipment (swings) for children w/ disabilities.
SDP as a District needs a bottom up approach with less direction from 440. Teachers need to teach using our vast knowledge of curriculum, content and student needs. The District doesn't need to buy a bunch of programs, spend money on consultants or purchase supplies from vendors and give us a choice of which ones we want (or them tell us which ones we need - as if we're not skilled enough to choose ourselves). Give money to the schools, let us tell them how we need to use it at school level then give us the space to do what's best individually for each school.
STEM activities/projects to help with their real world skills
Students in special education and ESOL will need additional supports both academically and social/emotionally including lower teacher/student ratios, extended day support, summer programs, and mental health supports that families don't have to struggle to access. As it stands now, children may be returning to buildings in the fall with less support than they had this year. How can schools effectively meet individual student needs without the staff needed to support them? I absolutely support efforts to make school buildings safe, but the next priority has to be enough personnel in buildings to make a difference for students.
Students should have a designated play area that is appropriate for children not just an open fenced in yard. A playground area would be nice for the kids to play at during lunch time.
Summer academic opportunities that allow a student to not just catch up (i.e. Summer school) but advance at their own pace would be beneficial.
Summer enrichment programs are essential at this point in time.
Summer program for preschoolers going to kindergarten
Support English Learners and their families
Support the many needs of the Deaf and Hard of hearing program. Upgrade technology and materials. Allow for programs such as iready or Aimsweb that are accessible to DHH kids. The materials currently in use cannot be effectively used for DHH kids.
The extracurricular activities are huge. While there's been no shortage of hand-wringing over "learning loss" what students are missing throughout this whole time is interaction with their peers - engaging in their passions. Yes, some of that has continued in small measures and in fits and starts, but it's hardly been a return to what was it for students. The sports, the clubs, the dances -- all of it -- that's the stuff that helps them develop as people. And bringing back those activities is going to have a much bigger impact on their development than whether they failed an online Algebra quiz during a global pandemic.
The safety of our children and staff should be first priority.
There must be an equitable distribution that benefits low income families and their schools and communities.
There should be a committee form to make sure that the money that the district is receiving be allocated properly to want the school really needs
We should focus every school on offering CTE or trades based training-there is a huge need for trades people and our kids need options!
Youth employment and paid internships.

Section 5: Respondent Information

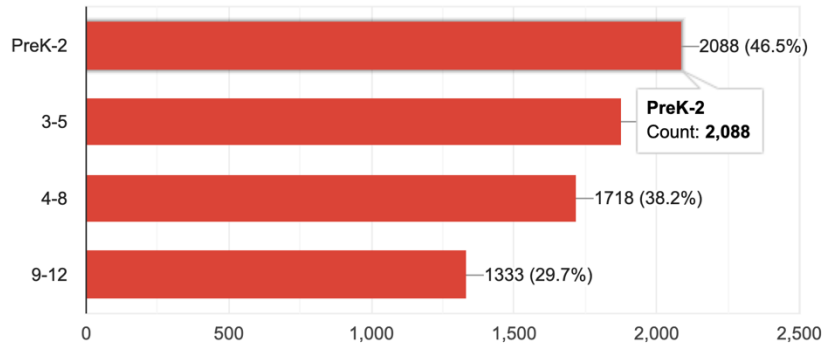
Completing survey as a...

4,524 responses



What grade bands are you representing in your responses (check all that apply)

4,494 responses



## **Section 6: Conclusion**

The need for facilities investment, mental health support, and classroom resources are top items for the more than 4,600 respondents of the survey. The top item of importance noted was facilities investments. Facilities remediation and modernization is essential and must be undertaken in a collaborative, responsible, safe, and accountable manner. Additionally, mental health supports as well as classroom resources are critical and must be a significant portion of the funding allocation.

There are myriad additional items of importance that should also be considered. Technology, tutoring, extracurricular supports and many other resources are also items of critical importance to the respondents.

More than one billion dollars in funding can, and should, have long-term impact on our school communities. That can be achieved by ensuring that voices of educators, students, parents, and community members are heard in the process. With over 4,600 respondents, our survey provides an important starting point for this discussion.

Additionally, we must ensure that we continue to work towards a full and equitable funding system for public education—one that will not be achieved by this one time infusion of funding. This is, indeed, a once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure that we address critical needs of our schoolchildren. But it is not a panacea and does not absolve our local, state, or federal governments of their responsibility to fully and sustainably fund public education.