

# Spectrum K12 and ARRA Education Stimulus Funding



As parents, educators, school administrators and business leaders, we all share the same fundamental goal - to ensure our children learn as much as they can, given their unique and individual capabilities and talents. On February 17, 2009 President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) into law. In the words of the U.S. Department of Education, the overall goals of the education portion of ARRA are to stimulate the economy in the short-term and invest wisely, using these funds to improve schools, raise achievement, drive reforms and produce better results for children and young people for the long-term health of our nation.

Spectrum K12's long history of innovation and leadership have been based on the ARRA objectives and underlying core reform areas as described by the U.S. Department of Education. Spectrum K12's vision is to reinvent the classroom through delivery of a dynamic **Student Achievement Management** system to enable personalized learning for every child. Spectrum K12's EXCEED™ product automates, streamlines and simplifies the entire personalized learning process so comprehensive, clear and accurate student outcome data is used to drive instructional decisions on a student by student basis. EXCEED goes one step further and gives administrators the ability to identify what works and what doesn't and capture best practices. By identifying optimal curriculum, interventions, and instruction across instructional groups, classrooms, schools, districts and states, administrators can drive continuous improvement.

Spectrum K12 thinks this economic-stimulus package provides an unprecedented opportunity for Spectrum K12 and our partner districts to raise achievement at the student, classroom, school, district and state levels.



This document provides an overview of how Spectrum K12's solution aligns with ARRA objectives and funding sources as provided by the U.S. Department of Education. The document below is from the U.S. Department guidance on use of ARRA funds ([www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/uses.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/uses.doc)) with Spectrum K12 inserts in areas where our solution directly supports the specific U.S DOE guidance.

# AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009: USING ARRA FUNDS TO DRIVE SCHOOL REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT

April 24, 2009

Education funds provided through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)* provide a unique opportunity to jump start school reform and improvement efforts while also saving and creating jobs and stimulating the economy. These one-time resources should be spent in ways most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness.

In America, all students should graduate from high school prepared for college and a career and have the opportunity to complete at least one year of postsecondary education. This means that we must dramatically improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. *ARRA* identifies four core reforms that will help the nation meet that goal: (1) adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments; (2) establishing data systems and using data for improvement; (3) increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers; and (4) turning around the lowest-performing schools.

*ARRA* provides billions of dollars to strengthen education through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF); Title I, Part A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*; Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*; Pell Grants; Federal Work-Study; and other programs. It also provides support for adults with disabilities through the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program and the Independent Living programs authorized under the *Rehabilitation Act*.

The most significant sources of K-12 funding that can be used to purchase Spectrum K12's EXCEED Student Achievement Management, RTI and IEP software as well as our professional development offerings fall under:

- IDEA, Parts B & C  
\$6.1 billion (50%) available April 1  
\$6.1 billion in (50%) available between summer and fall 2009
- Title I, Part A  
\$5 billion (50%) available April 1  
\$5 billion (50%) available between summer and fall 2009
- Title I, School Improvement Grants  
\$3 billion made available Fall 2009
- State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF)  
\$4.35 billion competitive grants awarded to states by the U.S. Department of Education under the "Race to the Top" - 2010 grant awards will be made in two rounds; late Fall 2009, Summer 2010  
\$650 million in competitive awards under the "Invest in What Works and Innovation" fund - 2010 grant awards will be made in two rounds; late Fall 2009, Summer 2010

This document includes framing questions for decision making and examples of potential uses of funds to improve educational outcomes from early learning through high school. It is intended to spark ideas about how districts and schools might use *ARRA* funds, particularly those available under the SFSF, Title I, and IDEA Part B programs. Districts generally have up to two years to obligate these funds. While many school districts may need to use a portion of their *ARRA* funds to save jobs, every district and school should be considering how to use these funds to improve student outcomes over the next two years and to advance reforms that will have even longer-term impact.

## Framing Questions for Decision Making

In considering how to best spend *ARRA* funds, decision makers should consider whether they can answer "yes" to these five questions:

**1. Drive results for students?** Will the proposed use of funds drive improved results for students, including students in poverty, students with disabilities, and English language learners?

Spectrum K12's EXCEED™ student achievement management product suite provides a web-based platform to manage the personalized learning process for ALL students and programs including RTI, special education and English language learners/ESL. EXCEED gives teachers an easy way to drive day-to-day activities, research based interventions and outcomes to help all students achieve success. EXCEED monitors academic and behavioral progress, displays efficacy and fidelity, and surfaces achievement gaps at the student, class, grade, group or district level.

**2. Increase capacity?** Will the proposed use of funds increase educators' long-term capacity to improve results for students?

EXCEED's Return on Intervention™ functionality aggregates data on a classroom, group, grade, school and district level to show what works (curriculum, interventions and instruction that most effectively drives student achievement) so administrators can continuously identify and replicate best practices district wide. The data collected by EXCEED can also be used to determine areas and individuals that require additional professional development.

**3. Accelerate reform?** Will the proposed use of funds advance state, district, or school improvement plans and the reform goals encompassed in *ARRA*? The four specific areas identified in *ARRA* that evidence shows make a critical contribution to student results include:

- Making progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities;
- Establishing pre-K-to college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement;
- Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need;
- Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

The underlying principle behind each of these reforms is delivering high quality, evidence based instruction targeted to individual student need - personalizing learning. Spectrum K12's EXCEED simplifies and streamlines the entire personalized learning process - saving time while providing integrated access to clear, accurate student and instructional data to target high quality instructional strategies to individual student needs. EXCEED gives teachers and administrators the ability to drive day-to-day activities, research based interventions and outcomes to help all students achieve success. EXCEED monitors academic and behavioral progress, displays efficacy and fidelity, and surfaces achievement gaps at the student, class, grade, group or district level.

**4. Avoid the cliff and improve productivity?** Will the proposed use of funds avoid recurring costs that states, school systems, and schools are unprepared to assume when this funding ends? Given these economic times, will the proposed use serve as "bridge funding" to help transition to more effective and efficient approaches?

Spectrum K12's flexible business practices, software licensing and financing options give states and districts the opportunity to structure the purchase of the EXCEED product to avoid the "funding cliff".

**5. Foster continuous improvement?** Will the proposed use of funds include approaches to measure and track implementation and results and create feedback loops to modify or discontinue strategies based on evidence?

In a single, web-based platform Spectrum K12's EXCEED combines technology and process to provide a real-time view of student achievement, interventions and progress monitoring to show what is working most effectively at the individual student, class, grade, group or district level. In addition, EXCEED's Return on Intervention™ presents a correlated view of outcome, fidelity and economics so administrators can continuously assess effectiveness at the classroom, school or district level and modify curriculum, intervention and instructional strategies.

Using short-term *ARRA* funds effectively will require new thinking and thoughtful conversations among state, district, and school leaders, as well as teachers, students, families, and communities. The first step is a careful examination of student achievement data to determine where to focus improvement efforts. To inform thoughtful planning, below are examples of potential uses of funds for early learning through high school. These examples are not intended to be a menu of options or a list of "silver bullets," but rather a starting point for consideration in light of local goals, data, and context. Ultimately, if educators and community leaders focus on a small number of related and reinforcing strategies and apply these substantial one-time resources consistent with their overall plan for increasing student achievement, they are more likely to improve results than with a diffuse or scattershot approach.

All the examples below may be supported using funds made available through the SFSF program. To the extent consistent with program requirements, districts, and schools may also use Title I and *IDEA* Part B funds to support these or similar strategies and are encouraged to do so. The Department will supplement these examples over time with ideas about best practices from schools throughout the nation. The Department will also provide specific guidance on uses of funds allowable under Title I, *IDEA* Part B, and other *ARRA* programs.

## Uses of Funds: Examples for Consideration

These initial examples are organized into five categories that reflect the priorities of *ARRA*:

- Adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments;
- Establishing data systems and using data for improvement;
- Increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers;
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools; and
- Improving results for all students, including early learning, extended learning time, use of technology, preparation for college, and school modernization.

## Adopting rigorous standards and high-quality assessments

*World-class education systems are built upon college- and career-ready standards, rich and engaging curricula based on the standards, and high-quality, aligned assessments to measure student learning. While many states are actively revising their standards and assessments to increase rigor and improve alignment, districts and schools can concurrently take steps to promote rigorous standards, effective assessment systems, and strong curriculum. Some examples would be to:*

- Increase student participation in rigorous advanced courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment in postsecondary credit-bearing courses and provide professional development for teachers and counselors to make the expansion possible.

- Develop or adopt formative and interim assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, especially students with disabilities and English language learners, and that provide timely data to help educators track and improve student progress. If assessments are technology based, train teachers in how to use this technology.
 

In a single, web-based platform Spectrum K12's EXCEED combines technology and process to provide a real-time view of student achievement, interventions and progress monitoring to show what is working most effectively at the individual student, class, grade, group or district level. EXCEED eliminates redundant data entry and helps ensure data accuracy through seamless integration with the student information system, assessment, gradebook, and other student data and instructional systems.
- Purchase or adapt a high-quality curriculum aligned with standards with embedded assessments. Include instructional materials appropriate for English language learners and students with disabilities. For two years of ARRA funding, intensively train all teachers in effectively using the curriculum with their students.
 

EXCEED gives administrators the ongoing data needed to optimally inform teacher professional development. Instead of a "one size fits all" approach, administrators can target professional development to meet the most critical needs in the most cost effective way.

## Establishing data systems and using data for improvement

*At the heart of improving schools and school districts are systems to gather and analyze data and provide feedback to educators, students, families, and the community in order to improve student and teacher performance continuously. Examples of investments in data systems and effective use of data include efforts to:*

- Develop or enhance existing data systems to provide teachers access to (1) student data in such areas as attendance, grades, course schedules, and disability or English language learner status, and (2) data that show academic performance and growth, how those compare to statewide averages for similar students and schools, and whether students are on track to meet standards and graduate from high school.
 

EXCEED sits on each practitioner's desktop and provides a real-time view of student achievement, interventions and progress monitoring to show what is working most effectively at the individual student, class, grade, group or district level. EXCEED eliminates redundant data entry and helps ensure data accuracy through seamless integration with the student information system, assessment, gradebook, and other student data and instructional systems.
- Train principals, teachers, guidance counselors, and other staff to use data to identify the specific help students need to succeed, to adjust classroom instruction to better address student strengths and weaknesses, and to target professional development and other resources on student and teacher needs.
- Track the number and percentage of students by school who graduate high school and go on to complete at least one year's worth of college credit. Use the information to strengthen high school programs and increase the percentage of students going on to college.

- Link districts' multiple data systems (including student, financial, and personnel) and use resulting information for analyses and reports that enable community, district, and school leaders to better understand the educational and cost effectiveness of district programs and strategies and allocate resources accordingly.
  - EXCEED's Return on Intervention™ presents a correlated view of outcome, fidelity and economics so administrators can continuously assess effectiveness at the classroom, school or district level and modify curriculum, intervention and instructional strategies.
  
- Launch an easy-to-use online Individualized Education Program (IEP) system for students with disabilities that is aligned with state academic standards and can be used by educators to create content-rich IEPs that are aligned with the general education curriculum.
  - The unique combination of built-in compliance, accountability, accessibility and performance provided by Spectrum K12's patented, easy-to-use IEP software solution dramatically reduces the time required to plan and track student achievement while also increasing the completeness, accuracy and accessibility of program information. All aspects of special education and IEP data management are included from referral to evaluation to initiation of delivery of services. Built-in goal banks make it easy to develop content-rich IEP's aligned with state standards. Across the U.S., school districts ranging in size from 300 to over 300,000 have seen quantifiable benefits from implementing the Spectrum K12 IEP solution including:
    - Improvements in reading and test scores
    - Reducing the number of overdue IEPs
    - Eliminating the majority of IEP procedural compliance issues
    - Decreasing the time spent preparing IEPs
    - Decreasing the length of IEP meetings
    - Increased effectiveness of IEP meetings
    - Reducing staff turnover
    - Special education cost savings

## **Increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers**

*Teacher effectiveness is a major influence on students' academic success. Districts and school leaders can improve teacher effectiveness and address inequitable teacher distribution through how they recruit, hire, induct, develop, evaluate, advance, and compensate teachers. Moreover, they can create the school conditions that foster teacher effectiveness and retention such as excellent school leadership, time for collaboration, and a culture of continuous improvement. Examples of strategies to improve teacher effectiveness and address inequitable distribution of highly qualified teachers between low- and high-poverty schools include to:*

- Establish and implement a fair and reliable teacher evaluation system that provides ongoing feedback to teachers about their performance based on objective measures of student achievement outcomes and multiple classroom observations, that gives guidance for improving instructional practices, and that is used to inform teacher professional development and advancement.
  - EXCEED gives administrators objective, real-time and historic outcome data at the individual student, classroom, group, school and district level. This makes it easy for administrators to identify trends and relative performance at all levels - including individual practitioners. With the data collected and reported via EXCEED, administrators have objective criteria that when combined with classroom observations, can be used to individualize teacher professional development.

- Attract effective teachers into high-poverty schools and hard-to-staff subject areas by restructuring personnel operations to increase the pool of high-quality applicants, make timely hiring decisions, place teachers appropriately, and provide feedback to teacher preparation programs on the success of their graduates. Fill shortage areas by supporting teachers in obtaining dual certification in special education or English language acquisition.
- Redesign teacher professional development and school schedules to ensure that teacher learning opportunities are sustained, job-embedded, collaborative, data-driven, and focused on student instructional needs. Help teachers master relevant content knowledge, especially for middle and high school teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas, such as math and science. Provide intense professional development over two years and additional training to highly effective teachers who will be able to serve as expert instructional leaders and coaches in the future.
 

Spectrum K12 offers a variety of professional development training focused on sharing best practices in response to intervention, special education and other at-risk program administrators and educators as well as parents and the community. Spectrum K12 has trained more than 6,000 administrators in 30 states using a framework that has been implemented, tested and proven in K-12 school districts of all sizes. Our professional development training provides a rich, collaborative, interactive experience to provide numerous opportunities to practice techniques in a supportive, risk-free environment. Participants leave our training fully prepared to immediately implement best practices incorporating feedback gathered from their peers and our expert coaches.
- Support new teachers in their first two years on the job through induction programs that include structured mentoring, teacher networks, and extensive professional development.
- Provide professional development for special education and general education teachers on evidence-based school-wide strategies in reading, math, writing, science, and other subject areas, and positive behavioral supports to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.
 

Spectrum K12 offers a variety of professional development training and has trained more than 6,000 administrators in 30 states using a framework that has been implemented, tested and proven in K-12 school districts of all sizes. One of our core offerings is *Aligning Student Focused IEP Goals to State Content Standards* which provides the skill and tools to analyze relevant data to establish a student's baseline, develop a data based present level of academic achievement and functioning performance, develop individualized goals based on state standards, write goals that are instructionally easy to implement, select appropriate progress monitoring procedures, align student focused goals to the general education curriculum, utilize goal banks more effectively and ensure state and federal compliance.
- Train school staff to partner with families to improve student learning, including helping staff clearly communicate about school programs and individual student progress and fostering involvement in school activities and decision making. Support home visits, family nights, and parent training that help families make informed decisions about their children's academic program, request needed services, assist with homework, and support learning in other ways.
- Upgrade school leader recruitment efforts and create a two-year program of professional development and coaching, with special attention to new principals, to increase principal effectiveness in raising school performance.

- Redesign teacher and principal compensation systems to reward factors related to contribution and effectiveness. Increase pay to attract and retain effective math and science teachers.

## Turning around the lowest-performing schools

*Turning around persistently low-performing schools is likely to require a significant overhaul of school staff, leadership, instructional program and calendar, and for the most distressed schools, school closing or consolidation. In the context of taking such forceful action, examples of strategies that can contribute to school improvement include to:*

- Aggressively restructure or close a district's persistently lowest performing schools and reopen with new leadership and staff, a new research-based instructional model, longer school day and year, and intensive job-embedded professional development for teachers.
- Support community schools that offer art, reading clubs, and other academic enrichment while also engaging community, social service, and health organizations to better serve students and their families.
- Provide incentives, including bonuses, to teams of highly effective teachers and leaders to move to low-performing schools and to take on instructional leadership roles.
- Add time to the school day and year and redesign the school schedule to increase time for core academics, enrichment, and staff collaboration.
- Create 9th grade academies staffed with highly effective teachers to help students transition successfully to high school, and create summer programs that prepare struggling students to be successful in gateway courses, such as algebra, and in college-preparatory Advanced Placement classes.
- Launch a comprehensive literacy program. In an elementary school, purchase a new reading curriculum that focuses on improving students' oral language competence and academic vocabulary so as to improve comprehension and address the fourth-grade reading drop off. Provide an intensive two-year training program for all teachers and the principal. In a secondary school, train staff and purchase materials for a literacy program that identifies students' needs, supports literacy development across content areas, and provides interventions for struggling students.
- Create intensive summer institutes and ongoing support for teams of principals, teachers, and counselors from low-performing schools to analyze data and develop specific action plans for improving student results.
- Develop a data-driven approach to understanding school performance and the causes of low performance; closely monitoring results of restructured schools; providing results to school staff, families and communities; and then using this information to modify approaches and expand successful approaches.

*EXCEED's **Integrated Student Profile** provides a single view of all student demographic, instructional and life event information for the current or any previous academic year ensuring fully-informed data-driven decision making. EXCEED aggregates data on a class room, group, grade, school and district level so administrators gain insight on performance to replicate best practices and identify root causes and address areas of poor performance.*

## Improving results for all students

*In using ARRA funds, districts should also consider other strategies consistent with ARRA's reform goals and the evidence on improving student outcomes. These include: strengthening early learning; extending learning time; strengthening preparation for college and careers; using technology to improve teaching and learning; modernizing school facilities; and conducting reviews, demonstrations, and evaluations that enhance program effectiveness. Examples in these areas include efforts to:*

- *Strengthen early learning.* Align a district preschool program with state early learning guidelines and K-3 standards and support credentialing and intensive training for staff working with high-poverty children and families. Provide comprehensive screenings to identify at-risk children and connect with vision, health, and other services. Expand the availability and range of inclusive placement options for preschoolers with disabilities by developing the capacity of public and private preschool programs to serve these children. If there is a plan for sustainability, expand high-quality preschool programs to provide access for larger numbers of young children.
- *Extend learning time for students.* Expand after-school and summer learning programs for two years in conjunction with existing community providers to provide more time for learning, including one-on-one and small group instruction, opportunities for service, internships, the arts, and other activities that both enrich the curriculum and address the specific needs of low-performing students.
- *Strengthen preparation for college and careers.* Offer dual enrollment courses and student internships and train school staff to help students understand college and career options, provide effective guidance, and create a college-going culture. For students with disabilities, employ transition coaches for two years to identify work-study, community service, internship, college, and career opportunities and to establish community partnerships that can endure after two years.
- *Use technology to improve teaching and learning.* Purchase and train teachers to use instructional software, technology-enabled white boards, and other interactive technologies that have been shown to be effective aids for instruction, particularly for English language learners, students with disabilities, and both struggling and advanced learners. Use open education resources or purchase high-quality online courseware in core high school content areas.
- *Modernize school facilities.* Modernize schools to be open to the community, accessible and energy efficient, and to have up-to-date science labs and technology that enhance learning. Include early learning facilities that are safe and appropriate for the youngest children.
- *Conduct reviews, demonstrations, and evaluations that enhance effectiveness.* Invest in studies and reviews that can strengthen programs over time. For example, assess the rigor of coursework in high-poverty schools in order to revise the curriculum and develop instructional programs for gifted and talented students in those schools. Likewise, systematically review the district's central operations and budget to identify opportunities for reallocating resources to better support district priorities.

## About Spectrum K12 School Solutions

Spectrum K12 School Solutions Inc. is the leading provider of Student Achievement Management, Response to Intervention (RTI) and special education IEP software serving 11% of the U.S. K-12 student population including 20 of the top 100 school districts in the United States. Our EXCEED™ student achievement management software gives teachers an easy way to drive day-to-day activities, research based interventions and outcomes to help all students achieve success. EXCEED monitors academic and behavioral progress, displays efficacy and fidelity, and surfaces achievement gaps at the student, class, grade, group or district level. Our patented software has enabled personalized learning for over 5 million children in 29 states in support of our mission to close the achievement gap and Move Every Child Forward™. For more information on how Spectrum K12 can help drive student achievement, visit [www.spectrumK12.com](http://www.spectrumK12.com) or contact your local Spectrum K12 account manager.

For more information on ARRA and specific funding allocations for your education organization, please visit [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or [www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/uses.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/uses.doc).