



## School funds stimulate forever

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The U.S. Department of Education has begun dispersing more than \$2.5 billion in federal education dollars to Pennsylvania's schools, including more than \$9 million expected for the Scranton School District.

That's a significant amount of money being distributed for the next two years. Much of it is designated for specific use under federal guidelines, but there is some flexibility with a portion of funding.

How districts such as Scranton use that money is crucial.

It's crucial not simply for schools and students, but for entire communities.

Last year, three of Scranton's 18 schools, including Scranton High School and West Scranton High School, did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in student achievement under the No Child Left Behind law, making Scranton the only district in Lackawanna County to fall short of its AYP goals for the year.

The federal funding for education is, by statute, intended to impact those students and schools most in need, therefore the first stop for Scranton's federal stimulus dollars should be those three schools that are not meeting achievement benchmarks.

In considering how best to use that money to improve those schools, emphasis should be placed on investments that can occur within the next two years and result in long-term benefits.

That's true for all of the federal stimulus funding but is especially important for the each school district's discretionary dollars.

Several examples of short-term investments by school districts with long-term benefits are teacher coaching and training, curriculum development, and student interventions and supports.

An additional priority should be the improvement of out-dated school facilities. Facility improvements should include renovations and repairs to school components closely related to instructional services, such as libraries, science labs, and technology centers.

These kinds of investments using education stimulus dollars can improve academic achievement and graduation rates, which can then have a positive ripple effect on the social and economic well-being of the entire Scranton area.

Consider this statistic from a recent Penn State University study:

Decreasing the number of high school dropouts by half would nationally produce \$45 billion per year in net economic benefit to society.

That would be quite a stimulus, and it's only one example of how education investments offer far-reaching benefits.

That's why it's important for school districts to make sound investments with the education stimulus money.

Such investment in education works as a triple stimulus — helping struggling students and schools, boosting the economy in the short run, and building our communities for the long run.

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