

Evidence-Based Funding in Illinois— Now What?

A review panel of education stakeholders, including school business officials, is helping make student funding more equitable in Illinois public schools.

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To “ensure every Illinois student receives a meaningful opportunity to learn irrespective of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or community-income level,” Public Act 100-0465—Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act—was signed into law by Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner on August 31, 2017. The legislation has multiple aims:

1. To guarantee that every school has the resources to provide all students with a high-quality education and that all students receive the skills required to graduate from high school.
2. To eliminate the achievement gap between at-risk and non-at-risk students.
3. To ensure that the state satisfies its obligation to assume the primary responsibility to fund public education.
4. To relieve the disproportionate burden placed on local property taxes to fund schools.

The Illinois EBF model is fairly complex. The first portion of the model calculates an adequacy target or dollars necessary to educate students using 34 unique cost factors for each school district. The second portion of the formula measures a district's local resources compared with the adequacy target. The last portion calculates how far a district is from adequacy and assigns a tier that is used to allocate additional state funding. Districts that are the farthest away from their adequacy target are to receive the most tier funding.

According to the state board of education, 89% of the \$366.6 million of new state funding went to the districts farthest away from adequacy; 79% of the new FY 2018 funding went to districts serving at or above 53% low income, 85% of all black students, and 75% of all Latino students in Illinois.

Although the funding model provides additional resources to the intended student population, the annual \$350 million that is currently allocated will not fully fund the model until FY 2051, although the state initially promised the model would be fully funded in 10 years. The state will need to increase its funding by \$8.6 billion in order to achieve its promise (see Table 1).

The annual amount allocated is beginning to close the equity gap; however, the number of dollars needed to fully fund the model is significant.

Table 1. Full Funding of EBT Model

	FY 19	FY 20	FY 25	FY 30
Amount needed to fully fund model	\$7,350	\$7,504	\$4,371	\$779
Total new money put into EBF since FY 2000		779	4,676	8,572
Shortfall/surplus		-\$6,725	-\$3,592	\$0

Source: Center for Tax and Budget Accountability.

One element of notable concern in Public Act 100-0465 was funding for alternative schools. Alternative schools provide optional education programs for expulsion-eligible, truant, and alternative-learning students. Because alternative schools do not receive local funding, they cannot be assigned a tier or receive tier funding. The regional superintendents searched for an easy way to allow for the lost tier funding they believed had been an oversight in the model.

At the September 2019 PRP meeting, some panel members recommended that the model be changed so alternative schools could receive tier funding—a recommendation not well received by other panel members who strongly objected to making any changes to the formula.



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