

EBF & Mandated Programs: Understanding the Difference

Protecting Illinois' Investment in Public Education

Illinois has made historic progress by investing in the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula to drive equity and adequacy in school funding. However, Mandated Program reimbursements (MCATs) — state funding for services school districts are legally required to provide — have not kept pace. When mandated reimbursements fall short, districts are forced to use dollars intended for other purposes to backfill those gaps, limiting their ability to improve student outcomes as intended.

	Evidence-Based Funding (EBF)	Mandated Services (MCATs)
Purpose	Ensures all districts reach an adequate level of funding to support student success.	Reimburses districts for required services mandated by the State of Illinois.
Use	Funds can be used locally to address each district's unique needs.	Funds must be used for specific mandated programs (transportation and special education tuition).
Examples	Hiring teachers, reducing class sizes, expanding career pathways, adding interventionists, etc.	Transporting students, serving special education needs, and covering orphanage tuition.
Challenge	Progress toward adequacy requires a continued annual state investment.	Chronic underfunding forces districts to use local revenue to cover state-required costs.
Legislative Goal	Continue at least a \$350 million annual EBF increase.	Fully fund all mandated categorical reimbursements at 100%.

Both EBF and Mandated Programs Are Essential

Evidence-Based Funding ensures students have the resources they need. **These funds drive educational adequacy** – investing in students and opportunity.

Mandated Program funding ensures districts can meet their legal obligations without draining other resources. **These funds ensure fairness** – the State pays its share for the services it requires.

Together, they sustain strong, equitable public schools across Illinois. Fully funding both keeps our schools stable, equitable, and focused on student learning.