

Education

OVERVIEW

The FY23 Boston Public Schools (BPS) budget reflects a continued focus on equitable recovery for Boston’s students and families. A record \$1.33 billion in funding will support 50,000 students at BPS, and another \$264.5 million will support approximately 11,001 Boston students in charter schools.

The increase of \$40 million over the FY22 BPS operating budget supports the district’s aim to provide a high-quality experience for every student regardless of school, program, or neighborhood. Boston’s FY23 education budget, including the BPS operating budget and the City’s charter school tuition assessment, continues to represent roughly 40% of the City’s budget as a whole.

Through the pandemic, BPS pivoted to remote learning and sought new ways to deliver critical services like meals and counseling to students and their families. Now, BPS balances support and collaboration across the City as well as federal funding to address the immediate needs of students, academically socially, and emotionally, while continuing to adapt and evolve to ensure better outcomes for all students.

FY23 BPS Investments

	Operating Budget	FY23 ESSER
Return	\$6.2M	\$18M
Recover	\$35.7M	\$66M
Reimagine	\$10.4M	\$20.1M
Total	\$52.2M	\$104.2M

Table 1

FY23 investments in BPS are grouped in three categories - *Return*, *Recover*, and *Reimagine* - across operating funds and federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds (Table 1). To meet facility management challenges and achieve a safe return to school buildings, the district is increasing staffing for exterior grounds and training for custodians. In addition to \$4.8 million in operating funds, \$8 million in ESSER funds will be put towards investments in high quality facilities, including health and safety costs.

The *Recover* category responds to the learning loss and trauma that has disproportionately impacted students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. An investment of \$26.7 million in direct funding for schools will maintain key support positions despite enrollment declines. BPS will also add 26 social workers to the operating budget, expanding social emotional supports for students, matched by \$3.75 million in ESSER funds. By leveraging \$63 million more in ESSER funds, BPS will tackle other *Recover* priorities, such as expanded access to academic counseling and libraries and \$50 million in school-based ESSER allocations.

Reimagine expresses the district’s intention to transform BPS schools into what students need them to be. Operating investments of \$10.4 million support expanded access to guidance counseling for high schoolers, implementation of Mass Core for all high schools, and expanded translations and interpretations for district communications. An additional \$20 million in ESSER funds allotted for this category in

FY23 will also provide additional programming for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Together, operating and ESSER funds work to implement sustainable investments to provide a quality guarantee to students and their families in the years to come.

BPS OPERATING BUDGET

At a \$1.33 billion appropriation, the FY23 operating budget is the largest in BPS's history (Table 2), despite a projected decline in student enrollment. The FY23 allocation makes investments to support efforts to not only recover from COVID-19, but also transform the school district. The FY23 budget assists schools with declining enrollments to mitigate the negative impacts COVID-19 has had on school communities.

BPS Operating Budget Summary

	FY22 Adopted	FY23 Recom.	\$ Change
Direct School Expenses	\$830M	\$853M	\$23M
School Services Budgeted Centrally	\$319M	\$334M	\$15M
Central Administration	\$74M	\$79M	\$5M
Non-BPS Student Services	\$71M	\$69M	-\$2M
Total BPS Budget	\$1.295B	\$1.335B	\$40M

Table 2

Funding directly in schools will increase by \$23 million from the FY22 budget to \$853 million.

In addition to school budgets, schools receive significant support from services that are budgeted centrally. This includes items such as transportation, particular special education services, and facilities maintenance. This portion of the budget will increase 4.6% from the FY22 budget to \$334 million. With these support funds added to funds budgeted at the school level, \$1.187 billion is expected to be spent

on school services, nearly 90% of the BPS budget.

BPS is also responsible for funding services for students living in Boston and attending school outside of BPS, including adult education students, students placed out-of-district for special education and vocational education, and pre-kindergarten students at community-based organizations. In addition, BPS provides transportation for out-of-district special education students, and these costs comprise 23.7% of the FY23 BPS transportation budget. Total funds budgeted for non-BPS students will decrease 3.1% from the FY22 budget to \$69.2 million, comprising 5.2% of the overall FY23 BPS budget.

In FY23, the Central Administration budget will increase by 6.8% to \$78.6 million, to ensure organizational effectiveness, accountability, and strong coordination and support from district leadership.

Along with additional federal funding, the \$52.2 million in FY23 BPS operating investments will support children and their families through a post-pandemic world with more opportunities for everyone. The FY23 BPS investments continue to be guided by three principles: *Return*, *Recover*, and *Reimagine*.

In FY21 and FY22, BPS used operating investments to put a full time nurse and full time social worker at every school, with additional student and family supports provided by Family Liaisons. FY23's investments build on that support team to invest in school-based academic counselors, coordinating recovery across teams, building learning plans, addressing special education IEPs, and analyzing English learner data to ensure students are meeting their academic goals to return and recover successfully.

To create a high-quality, rigorous, ethnically and culturally responsive

curriculum and instruction, the district is utilizing operating and federal funds to provide access to MassCore at the secondary level, increasing access to physical education, art, music, and academic enrichment. Along with investments in inclusive curricula and programming, this work aims to reimagine what is possible within the district, by standardizing graduation requirements across high schools and setting the bar high to college and career readiness through accelerated learning and equitable opportunities for all.

To provide equitable transportation, nutritious meals, and safe education spaces adequately equipped to help students thrive and succeed, the FY23 BPS budget includes investments in staffing and increased contracts for the Operations and Facilities teams. The additional capacity will address critical infrastructure emergencies as well as contribute to long-term planning in the district.

Also included in the FY23 BPS budget are investments in extended learning and enrichment. These investments aim to expand access to quality library collections and redesign athletics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Because of enrollment declines, the FY23 operating budget includes additional supports to mitigate negative impacts COVID-19 has had on school communities. A \$26.7 million investment in school supports on top of existing soft landings and the Foundation for Quality is intended to ensure that schools are able to maintain level services and support their students, regardless of enrollment declines.

Early Childhood Education

Each year, the City continually expands the number of quality pre-kindergarten seats, as part of the Universal Pre-K (UPK) initiative. In the 2022-2023 school year,

over 4,600 three- and four-year-olds are expected to be enrolled in a quality pre-kindergarten program, up more than 1,500 seats compared to when the UPK initiative began in FY14. The City's Quality Pre-K Fund has enabled and accelerated this expansion over the last several years, and a new partnership between BPS and the City's Office of Early Childhood will support Mayor Wu's vision of universal, affordable, high-quality early education for all infants, toddlers, and children under five, including a strategy of integrating family child care providers into the UPK system.

BPS early education programs have been recognized as among the most effective in the nation at closing achievement gaps. They are content-rich in science, literacy, arts and math. Data shows that BPS pre-kindergarten attendees outperform their peers in third and fifth grade MCAS, in both ELA and Math.

Special Education

The FY23 BPS budget makes robust investments in special education that will result in over 50 new school-budgeted special education teachers and paraprofessional positions. The special education budget totals roughly \$312 million in FY23, an increase of \$4.9 million, or 1.6%, from the FY22 budget. The special education budget accounts for nearly a quarter of the total BPS budget and supports the over 10,200 students with disabilities, or about 21% of the BPS student population.

The significant increase in special education teachers in the FY23 budget aligns with the continued inclusion rollout across the district and into new grade levels. In FY23, BPS plans to dedicate \$6.7 million in ESSER funds for programming for students with disabilities that addresses the impact of COVID-19 on their learning and well-being.

In addition to mainstream or substantially separate placements in the district, BPS is responsible for the educational services of approximately 426 special education students in out-of-district placements. Over time, BPS has seen an increase in the number of high-need students and DCF-involved students placed in group homes who require private placement. BPS is fully or partly responsible for paying for services for most of these students, at a total projected cost of \$43 million in FY23. Some of the costs for these services will be reimbursed by Circuit Breaker. Tuition rates are established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Rate Setting Commission.

BPS is also responsible for providing education services to students with IEPs in private placements. To better support these students, the FY23 budget continues to fund a proportionate share team responsible for conducting IEP meetings and evaluations.

English Learners

The Bilingual/Sheltered English Immersion budget totals \$110 million in FY23, an increase of \$6.3 million, or 6.1%, from the FY22 budget. Nearly a third (31%) of BPS students has an ELL designation; as a group, they hail from 141 different countries and speak 83 languages. Anticipating that these students will require targeted support to address COVID-19-related learning loss, BPS will devote \$5 million in ESSER funds to bilingual supports and increased native language programming in FY23.

BPS Enrollment

Student enrollment is the foundation of the BPS budget. The preliminary stage of the budget process involves enrollment projections for each program, grade, and school, which are based on historic trends and current data. The projected enrollment at each school for the upcoming school year determines the allocation of resources

at the school level through the weighted student funding formula. The FY23 budget development process required close collaboration between school leaders and BPS Finance to develop accurate enrollment projections.

BPS projected enrollment for FY23 is approximately 49,850. The change in FY23 continues a trend of enrollment decline in the last 15 years, driven by broader demographic trends, with fewer students living in Boston and entering the district as birth rates decline and the cost of living continues to rise. Despite declining enrollment and decreasing salary and operational costs, BPS's budget will increase by about \$2,200 per pupil, from approximately \$24,900 per pupil in FY22 to \$27,100 in FY23. At the school level, BPS has seen some shifts in enrollment. BPS gives parents a voice in where their child attends schools, which causes shifts from year to year. The BPS School Committee has also supported school communities that have requested to expand grades in recent years, which has led to additional shifts.

Weighted Student Funding

Weighted Student Funding (WSF) ensures resource equity for all students no matter the school they attend. The weighted student funding model creates a baseline per-student funding amount and then adjusts the amount depending on individual student need. For example, students whose family income is at or below the poverty level will receive additional funding in the formula. Other needs-based weights include students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and vocational education students. A school's budget is calculated by adding the individual funding amounts for every student projected to attend that school in the fall. Additionally, each school also receives a foundation budget to support essential staff.

For FY23, the twelfth year using the WSF formula, BPS continues to refine this

needs-based method of funding. Student-based allocation models are the standard for transparent and equitable school budgeting. Such models allow dollars to follow students, and those dollars are weighted based on student need. BPS's highest-need students receive more resources through the weighted student funding structure.

When enrollment declines at a school, the BPS central office works closely with the school to appropriately adjust staffing. Particular care is made through this process to ensure classrooms are full so that they are affordable to schools. There are safeguards in place to assist schools with declines in enrollment, such as sustainability allocations and soft landings, as well as other reserves that are used throughout the budgeting process.

In FY23, WSF funding is decreasing by \$26.9 million, to \$519.7 million. WSF is only one component of schools' funding; total school funding will rise by \$22.7 million in FY23.

BPS school budgets also include substantial supports on top of WSF. The Foundation for Quality, which replaces sustainability funds, expands the definition of baseline services for schools, ensuring that all schools have a baseline amount of funding above compliance. Schools in transition will receive additional targeted funding, including supports for K-6 transitions, new inclusion programs, strands undergoing redesign, and capacity maintenance for existing programs.

The Opportunity Index

FY23 is the fifth year that BPS will be using the Opportunity Index (OI) as part of WSF. The OI is an innovative tool that quantifies differences in experiences, opportunities, and need between students, allowing BPS to allocate resources more equitably. The OI is a composite index that incorporates a range of data representing factors that are outside of the schools' control, yet are

predictive of students' academic outcomes. By rolling multiple measures into a single, more accessible metric ranging from 0.01 to 0.99, BPS is better equipped to direct resources and supports to the schools and students who need them most.

Since FY19, BPS has used OI for the allocation of two central sources of funding: School Support Funds, which support schools' academic priorities, and the Partnership Fund, which enables schools to partner with community nonprofit organizations. Funding is allocated based on student enrollment and level of need. In FY23, \$5 million in discretionary School Support Funds will be awarded to schools with an OI score greater than or equal to 0.35. Additionally, \$5.9 million from the Partnership Fund will be awarded to schools with an OI score greater than or equal to 0.56.

EXTERNAL FUNDS

External funds are provided directly to BPS through formula grants (entitlements), competitive grants, reimbursement accounts, and other grants, primarily from state and federal sources. These external funds are critical to the success of the district, but have decreased to 11.9% of total funding in FY23 from 15% in FY13 (Figure 1), excluding the infusion of \$276 million in time-limited ESSER III funding for pandemic recovery. Decreased external funding was identified as a challenge to BPS's long-term financial stability in the district's 2016 Long-Term Financial Plan. In recent years, the BPS budget has relied on the increased City appropriation to help absorb these decreases.

One of the largest sources of federal revenue for BPS is the Title I entitlement grant. BPS expects to receive \$43 million in Title I revenue in FY23. The grant's purpose is to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students by ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The grant

provides direct funds to schools with higher levels of poverty.

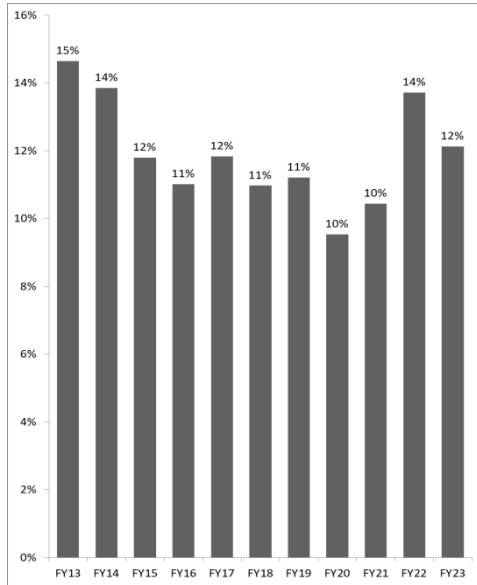


Figure 1 - External Funds as % of Total Funds FY13-21 Actuals, FY22 Appropriation, FY23 Adopted (Excluding ESSER III)

BPS receives two external revenue sources to fund the district’s comprehensive special education program. Through Circuit Breaker reimbursements, the Commonwealth shares the cost of educating students with disabilities once the cost to educate those students exceeds a threshold amount. BPS has budgeted approximately \$22.5 million in Circuit Breaker revenue in FY23. Additionally, funds provided through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant enable the district to provide special education services in the least restrictive environment possible for children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one, and to provide early intervention services for children from birth through age two. BPS expects to have \$17.8 million in IDEA funds available in FY23.

School Improvement Grants

In FY23, BPS will receive an estimated \$900,000 from the Commonwealth through Targeted Assistance Grant funding.

Targeted Assistance Grant funding is provided to the lowest performing schools in BPS, also known as turnaround or transformation schools, to increase professional development, add staff, and provide other supports. In FY23, 33 BPS schools will be eligible for this funding.

As school improvement grants end for each school exiting turnaround status, the district shifts these activities to the operating budget to continue the work of turning around low-performing schools. The FY23 budget includes \$1.79 million in funding to transition the Channing, Grew, English, Brighton, Excel, and Madison Park schools, where previous school improvement grants have ended or funding is tapering.

Federal Relief Funding

BPS is expecting \$400 million via the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. In FY21, the increase in the percentage of external funds as a share of total BPS funds (Figure 1) reflects COVID-19 relief funding, including a federal ESSER I grant. In FY22, federal ESSER II and ESSER III grants became available to BPS, with \$108 million already appropriated in FY22, both directly to schools and for districtwide initiatives.

BPS has used federal relief funding to make and match investments in the *Return, Recover, and Reimagine* framework for FY23. In the *Return* category, \$18 million will fund a range of activities, including increased capital planning capacity and facilities assessments, and investments in HVAC and air quality. In the *Recover* category, \$66 million will support expanded access to academic counseling for K-8 students, expanded access to libraries, social emotional supports for students, and school ESSER allocations. In the *Reimagine* category, \$20.1 million in ESSER funds will provide bilingual supports and increase native language programming, promote equitable literacy, complement operating

investments in implementing MassCore in all high schools, and reimagine programming for students with disabilities.

PERFORMANCE

BPS is committed to using data to improve school performance and provide the best education to students. In FY21, the district created a new performance management system based on the six anchor goals: eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, accelerate learning, amplify all voices, expand opportunity, cultivate trust, and activate partnerships. Each goal is paired with a series of aligned metrics to measure progress. BPS has been evaluating its progress towards academic goals using measurable outcomes for several years.

Graduation Rates

The overall four-year graduation rate for the BPS class of 2021 was 78.8%, a 4.5% increase over the 2020 rate and the highest ever recorded by BPS. The graduation rate has increased by 22.4% over the past decade, from 64.4% in 2011.

In 2020, sixteen Boston high schools achieved graduation rates of 80% or above: the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, New Mission High School, Mary Lyon Pilot High School, Another Course to College, Dearborn STEM Academy, Josiah Quincy Upper School, East Boston High School, TechBoston Academy, Boston Green Academy, Fenway High School, Boston Arts Academy, Dr. William Henderson Upper School, and Jeremiah E. Burke High School.

Dropout Rate

The overall dropout rate for grades 9-12 in 2021 was 2.0%, a 48.7% decrease from the 2020 dropout rate of 3.9%. BPS has cut the dropout rate by 69% over the past ten

years, with a decrease of 829 students dropping out annually over that period.

According to state guidelines, students in grades 6-12 are counted as dropouts if they leave school during the year for any reason other than transfer, graduation, death, or expulsion with an option to return.

Accountability Results

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) implemented a new accountability system in the fall of 2018, which determines schools' need for assistance or intervention based on a set of accountability indicators including student growth, graduation rate, and chronic absenteeism.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DESE did not issue school or district accountability determinations for the 2020-2021 school year and will pursue an "accountability lite" model for 2021-2022 featuring published data but no determinations. In 2019, DESE singled out the Hale and Winship as schools of recognition. Fourteen schools were classified as meeting or exceeding targets, and thirty-five were classified as making substantial progress toward targets. 67% of schools improved relative to 2018 performance. BPS met English language arts, math, and science targets for all students in grades 3-8, and many schools showed strong progress against targets.

In March 2020, as the result of a district review by DESE, BPS and DESE entered into a partnership to improve the district's lowest performing schools, continue to address systemic barriers to equity across the school system, and support its most vulnerable students to achieve their highest educational potential.

As part of that partnership, BPS committed to four priority initiatives: make improvements in BPS schools included among the lowest performing 10% of schools in the state; address instructional rigor, equitable access to advanced

coursework, and chronic absenteeism at the high school level; improve educational services for students with disabilities; and improve on-time arrival of school buses. BPS has also committed to a long-term initiative to develop a plan for improving services to English learners and improve interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient parents and guardians.

To assist in a holistic understanding of the progress that BPS made toward these goals, DESE undertook a follow-up district review of BPS in March 2022. The review found that progress had been made in multiple areas but that persistent challenges remained. The resulting systemic improvement plan succeeds the 2020 agreement with DESE and focuses on many of the same areas, as well as student safety, facilities, and data integrity. The City will work to meet the new commitments by the deadlines stipulated in the plan and will receive significant support from the Commonwealth, including an expected \$10 million in funding over three years.

BPS CAPITAL

The City is committed to modernizing Boston's public school infrastructure. Through a dedication of City capital funds and a strong working relationship with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the commitment more than doubles the capital spending on BPS facilities from FY18 to FY27.

The plan will result in new school buildings and major transformations, reconfigurations to align schools with K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 pathways, and increased investments district-wide for all school buildings and communities. The planning process is focused on creating high-quality, twenty-first-century learning environments for students, which contributes to closing opportunity gaps for more students.

The new Boston Arts Academy school building will open for the start of school in September. The Josiah Quincy Upper School is currently in construction, and the Carter School is currently in design. In FY23, the City will continue studying programming and siting for future elementary schools, including a new elementary school in East Boston. In addition, BPS will pursue building improvements to facilitate grade reconfigurations at various schools, including the Irving School building.

The City will continue districtwide investments in window replacements, bathroom upgrades, fire systems, radiator covers, entryway improvements, and plumbing and fixture upgrades to expand drinking water availability. Continuing to build on FY22 initiatives are investments in building accessibility, upgrade auditoriums, and improve building interiors and exterior grounds, as well as the fourth phase of the multi-year kitchen upgrade initiative. The City is also investing in new school maintenance initiatives to upgrade libraries, science rooms, and art rooms. Additionally, the City will continue annual programs for school yards, security improvements, and technology infrastructure, as well as leveraging the MSBA Accelerated Repair Program to fund roof, window, and boiler repairs.

The FY23-27 capital plan sustains and supports planning for large-scale projects coming out of the BPS Capital engagement process. The FY23-27 capital plan projects \$613 million in spending over the next five years.

CHARTER SCHOOL TUITION

Commonwealth charter schools, which are granted charters by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, are publicly-funded schools administered independently from local school districts and district bargaining rules and regulations. Commonwealth

charter schools are primarily financed by each student's sending district through per-pupil-based tuition.

Commonwealth charter schools are projected to educate approximately 11,001 Boston students in FY23. Boston is assessed by the Commonwealth to fund charter schools on a per-pupil basis, and the City's charter school tuition assessment is projected to increase by \$12.9 million over FY22 to a total of \$264.5 million due to increasing enrollment and higher per-pupil tuition rates.

As of FY23, Boston's charter school assessment has nearly tripled since the enactment of the 2010 Achievement Gap legislation. This has put increasing pressure on the City to fund education, as overall state support decreased for charter school tuition costs. However, thanks to the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) passed in 2019, Boston and other municipalities across the Commonwealth is seeing an increase in state education aid. The SOA will make an unprecedented \$1.5 billion investment in Massachusetts public schools, and provides an implementation timeline for fully funding charter school reimbursement costs. The Commonwealth fully funded the SOA in Year 1 (FY22) and more than fully funded the Year 2 (FY23) commitment in the state budget still being negotiated at the time the City's budget was approved.

See the *Revenue Estimates and Analysis* section of Volume I for more details on state education aid, charter school tuition reimbursement, and the SOA.

