

Governor Signs FY27 Budget

Key Education Investments & Advocacy Priorities

The FY27 Budget Conference Committee recently released its final report, and just days later both the House and Senate approved the compromise budget without amendment. Governor Healey has now signed the FY27 budget into law.

The final budget totals \$63.42 billion and represents:

- A 3.9% increase over the FY26 General Appropriations Act.
- \$54 million more than Governor Healey's FY27 proposal.
- \$50 million more than the Senate's FY27 proposal.
- \$500,000 more than the House's FY27 proposal.

The summary below highlights the major education-related investments included in the FY27 budget, along with key updates from the accompanying supplemental budget that affect FY27 funding. For a breakdown of the supplemental budget bill, <https://www.masc.org/fy27-budget-update-supplemental-budget-includes-funding-for-key-education-priorities/>.

If you have any questions about the FY27 budget or other legislative matters, please don't hesitate to reach out. As a reminder, the Legislature will be especially busy as the end of formal sessions approaches later this month, and MASC will continue to keep members informed of significant developments.

Chapter 70: \$7.66B in K-12 public education aid, completing the final year of the Student Opportunity Act's scheduled funding phase-in and representing a nearly 4% increase over FY26. The budget also increases minimum aid for school districts to \$160 per student, an increase of \$10 per student over FY26. Approximately 84% of Massachusetts school districts are projected to qualify as minimum aid districts in FY27.

Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA):

Funded at \$1.36B representing a \$40M increase over FY26.

- Three-quarters of the increase (\$30M) would be distributed to municipalities based on their

proportional share of the statewide population, with no municipality receiving more than 4% of the \$30M, while the remaining \$10M of the increase would be distributed as it has been in past years. This policy shift was initially pitched by the Senate.

Circuit Breaker Reimbursement: \$654.6M in non-surtax resources in the operating budget and \$152M in surplus surtax resources in the supplemental budget, bringing total funding for the program in FY27 to \$806.6M. This is up from \$733M in FY26.

Charter School Reimbursement: Funded at \$200.4M and is expected to fully fund the state's statutory obligation to mitigate Chapter 70 losses to charter schools. This is up \$1.4M over FY26.

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MASC SEEKING NEW FIELD DIRECTOR

With the upcoming retirement of CT Valley and Berkshire County region field director Liz Lafond, MASC is seeking a field director to fill that staff position.

As one of four field directors representing regions within Massachusetts, the successful candidate will work directly with school committees and superintendents to:

- Provide training to members and to respond to request for assistance.
- Coordinate efforts to aggregate district policy and to participate in gathering, revising, and implementing policy for school districts.
- Lead searches to fill vacant positions for superintendents.
- Represent MASC in responding to district requests.
- Collaborate with other staff colleagues in organizing orientations, customized training, workshops, and an annual state convention.

A complete job description, including qualifications, responsibilities, and benefits is posted on the MASC website: www.masc.org/jobs

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Transportation: \$153.8M total in transportation reimbursements (up roughly \$13M total over FY26). Of that, the funding is broken down into the following buckets:

- \$58.4 for School Transportation Reimbursements
- \$57.2M for regional school transportation reimbursements
- \$35.2M for homeless student transportation under McKinney-Vento
- \$3M in a recent supplemental budget earmarked for use in FY27 exclusively for reimbursements for out-of-district vocational school transportation.

School Meals Reimbursement: \$180M for universal free school meals (even with FY26 totals)

Rural School Aid: Funded at \$20M for FY27 (\$16M in the FY27 Budget and \$4M in the Supplemental budget earmarked for FY27). This represents an additional \$4M over last year. Rural school aid provides targeted funding to low-density, lower-income school districts (prioritized by student density) to support small and geographically dispersed communities, while requiring planning for regional collaboration and efficiency. The 2022 Special Commission on Rural Schools recognized a need for \$60M annually.

Universal Pre-K Initiative: \$15.5M for universal access to high-quality pre-K through the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI). CPPI provides competitive grants to districts and collaboratives to plan and expand access to high-quality, voluntary preschool - prioritizing communities with higher needs and supporting both program growth and implementation. This is \$5M less than FY26 totals.

METCO: Funded at \$30.9M for the METCO program which permits students from Boston to attend public schools in other communities that have agreed to participate. This represents an increase of \$1M over FY26.

ESOL Reserve: Funded at \$4M, this line-item provides funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages. This is a net new initiative and was originally proposed by the House at \$10M.

Early Literacy & High-Dosage Tutoring: Funded at a collective \$40M (split evenly between the two line-items). The \$40M investment represents level funding year over year and is part of the supplemental budget. The funding was similar in FY26 although the allocation has been adjusted to be an even split in FY27.

Cell Phone-Free Public Schools Grant Program: Funded at \$1M through the supplemental budget, matching the Senate supplemental budget proposal. This is a net new initiative.

Governor Proposes \$100 Million in One-Time Funding for Massachusetts Public Schools

Following the enactment of the FY27 Budget and the accompanying Fair Share Supplemental Budget, Governor Healey has filed an additional supplemental budget proposing a one-time \$100 million investment for Massachusetts public school districts. Funded through projected, unbudgeted Fair Share surtax revenues in FY27, the proposal is intended to help districts address ongoing fiscal pressures, avoid layoffs, retain educators and support staff, and preserve educational programming ahead of the new school year. If approved, the funding would be distributed to all 319 operating school districts based on FY27 student enrollment, providing approximately \$112 per student in additional aid on top of the \$160 million in minimum aid already included in the FY27 budget through the final year of the Student Opportunity Act.

School District Regionalization and Shared Services Grant Program:

Funded at \$16.5M. The Senate proposed \$25M, while neither the Governor nor the House funded the program. This is a net new initiative.

Outside Sections:

• Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC)

The budget establishes a new 29-member FBRC to review the state's K-12 school funding formula and make recommendations for future improvements. The last commission was convened in FY2015. DESE will provide staff support for the Commission, and MASC will have an appointment to the body. While the Senate's proposal included an appointment for the Massachusetts Teachers Association, that provision was not included in the final budget. The Commission is required to hold at least four public hearings across the Commonwealth and may also review other education finance programs. Any recommendations that would increase state costs must identify the resources needed to support those changes. The Commission's final report is due in October 2028.

• **Special Education Transportation** (Sections 66-68, 110, 133) - Collectively, these sections require school districts to provide detailed cost information related to out-of-district special education transportation contracts, require DESE to create a centralized database for all out-of-district transportation providers, and study the special education transportation marketplace further.

Past Presidents' Scholarship 2026 Announced

The MASC Past Presidents Council has selected two winners for the 2026 Past Presidents' Scholarship award. Congratulations to **Piper (Vane) Jacobs** who graduated last month from Drury High School in North Adams, and **Elizabeth Fraser**, a 2026 graduate of Silver Lake Regional High School.

Vane defines herself as a performer—it has been central to the past eleven years of her life. She says it has become what she wants to do and who she wants to be, while acknowledging that performance is a communal art—without others, a show would never make it to the stage. In her junior year, Vane rose to the occasion when the director of the school's spring musical had to step away following a cancer diagnosis. Vane had previously served as an assistant director but had never led a project on her own, let alone a cast of 25 and a two-hour performance. With only a two-month window, working with cast and crew through the challenges of mounting a fully

staged musical, she learned a lifetime of lessons about leadership and collaboration.

Commitment to school and community Vane says has been integral to becoming who she is and how she carries herself in life. An equally important motivator is her sense of social awareness. She is the Youth Chair of the North Adams Youth Commission, an appointed board which strives to improve visibility and infrastructure for the youth of Berkshire County. She recently helped organize a field trip that sent nine high school students to North Adams City Hall to learn about municipal government, meet with the Mayor, and see how politics affects their daily lives. And daily, she strives as a student, a community member, and a scholar to exemplify the values of compassion, leadership and collaboration. "I want to leave the world better than when I found it."

Elizabeth (Lizzy) Fraser, who graduated from Silver Lake's Allied Health program, has had a passion

to help others her whole life, and she plans to follow this mission as a nursing student at Merrimack College this fall.

Lizzy started on this path in eighth grade when she took a job as a waitress at a local nursing home, serving residents in the dining room and in their rooms when they were unwell. This was followed by volunteer work at a local soup kitchen, and as an officer in her Red Cross Club, a highlight of which was her competing at States in SkillsUSA in Basic Health Care—the first student ever from Silver Lake to do so in that category. In addition, she earned a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) license which enabled her to become a Personal Care Assistant working with clients in their homes. Soon after receiving her license, she was hired by Newfield House in Plymouth as a CAN. All this while balancing rigorous academic and athletic commitments, including as a member of the Unified Track team and Unified Basketball team.

Congratulations to both of them.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bill targeting addictive social media passes MA Senate

By a vote of 38-2, the MA Senate passes legislation earlier this month designed to curb the effects of social media on children, specifically the "addictive" features intended to keep young people scrolling.

Rather than restricting children's access to social media altogether, the proposal targets the platforms technology. Under the bill, autoplay, infinite scroll, and other endless scrolling or pagination functions would be turned off by default for minors. Young users would also receive reminders after spending long periods of time on a platform, and push notifications would be disabled between 10pm and 6am.

The legislation would also expand privacy protections for minors by limiting who can message them and prohibiting them from sharing their location data. The bill does not ban platforms from allowing users to submit government-issued ID or biometric data for age verification. Supporters say the proposal is designed to curb the design choices that encourage compulsive use without preventing teenagers from accessing the online communities they rely on.

The bill also requires social media companies to file annual reports to the Attorney General's office and make public how they target minors.

Unlike earlier proposals from the MA House, the Senate bill would not ban children under a certain age from social media or require everyone to verify their age simply to create an account. Instead, users would only need to verify they are 18 or older to access the addictive features covered by the bill, while anyone could opt out of age verification and continue using social media without those features enabled.

The earlier proposals drew criticism from digital rights advocates who argued that age-verification and parental consent requirements could create privacy risks and make it harder for LGBTQ+ youth and other marginalized communities to find support online.

The legislation now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration. The legislation comes as MA officials have intensified their scrutiny of social media companies, raising concerns that companies have prioritized engagement over children's well-being while school officials have pointed to rising student mental health needs they say have accompanied the spread of these design features.

NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCED: PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS' OPIOID RECOVERY TRUST

Recently announced, the Public School Districts' Opioid Recovery Trust aims to help public school districts recover from the opioid epidemic and develop responses to enhance educating students harmed by the opioid epidemic. This primarily includes students born with neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome, many of whom require special education supports, but the grants also cover students who have suffered traumatic family loss and educational interruptions because of the opioid epidemic. Awards from the trust will go where it will have the most impact, whether classroom services, school-based behavioral and mental health supports, instructional interventions, or other district and school-based supports that directly impact students harmed by

the opioid epidemic. The first phase of grants awarded \$24 million to 51 proposals selected from over 200 applicants coming from 34 states.

Any independent public school district (e.g. not a charter or private school network) can apply for the award. Districts can apply for three types of grants (district improvement grants; model programs and best practices grants; and innovation grants), each with a maximum grant value of \$500,000, to be implemented over a maximum of three years. Districts are urged to partner with civic and community organizations and with each other to best leverage resources on behalf of their students and communities.

Deadline for applications is November 15, 2026; grants will be announced by April 18, 2027. For more information about the grants and application details: www.SchoolDistrictOpioidRecoveryGrants.com.

Tuesday, August 11 | 6:00pm | **Legislative Update**

Register for virtual session online.

Friday, September 4 | Noon-1:00pm | **Learning Lunch**

Topic: Superintendent Evaluation: Setting Yourself up for Success

Saturday, September 19 | 8:00am-4:00pm | **Charting the Course**

(Somerville (tentative))

Saturday, September 26 | 9:00-11:00am | **Division VIII meeting**

Keefe Vocational Tech., Framingham

Saturday, October 17 | 9:00-11:00am | **Division VIII meeting**

Shawsheen Tech., Billerica

Saturday, October 17 | 8:00am-4:00pm | **Charting the Course**

West Springfield

UPCOMING
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