



MBAE Stimulus Report: State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II

This Fund is the single largest portion of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) education stimulus funds being made available to states. Phase I worth almost 3/4 of the total funds, or \$725 million for Massachusetts, was awarded in May of 2009. The remaining quarter, \$268 million, was awarded in February 2010 as part of Phase II. To qualify for these funds, Massachusetts had to make the following four assurances regarding:

- Establishment of a longitudinal data system
- Enhancement of the quality of academic assessments and standards
- Increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers
- Turning around the lowest performing schools

Given the depth of the financial crisis, there was great urgency both at the State and Federal levels to allocate Phase I funds quickly, and the application requirements were minimal. Phase II, however, required specific commitments around data collection and publication that will mean a significant increase in transparency for the Massachusetts public education system.

Massachusetts State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Phase II State Plan includes, in part, general information regarding existing structures and policies in place for collecting data, supporting low-achieving schools, tracking students from kindergarten through post-secondary education, and steps taken by the state to implement alternate assessments for students with disabilities. Beyond reporting current conditions, the application also includes specific commitments to collect the following data and make it data publicly available online:

- Annual updates to Massachusetts' Teacher Equity Plan
- A summary of teacher and principal evaluation systems
- Data regarding teacher and principal evaluation results
- Data matching teachers and student achievement or growth outcomes
- Data matching principals and student achievement or growth outcomes

Additionally, the State Plan details how Massachusetts will complete its data and technology systems to comply with the remaining elements of the America COMPETES Act, which stipulates the nature of data to be collected and publicized, including:

- The ability to share data from preschool through postsecondary education data systems
- A system of auditing data for quality, validity, and reliability
- A way to identify teachers to match teachers to their students
- Collecting information from students' transcripts, specifically courses taken and grades earned

Massachusetts was required to file the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II application to receive the balance of its stabilization funds, as well as to be eligible for the Race to the Top competition. However, beyond Massachusetts' clear fiscal interests, the data transparency requirements of the application hold great promise for advancing and sustaining education reforms when federal stimulus funding ends. With more targeted data being collected and disseminated, the citizens will have access to information about the issues that continue to confront the state's education system and will be able to advocate for and support solutions.