

## Analysis of newly-available Massachusetts school-level funding data shows little correlation between spending and student outcomes

MBAE releases tool that allows the public to compare and analyze newly-available school spending data; finds that funding within some districts is not distributed equitably

**June 20, 2019** – The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) today released an analysis of newly-available school-level funding data that shows schools that serve similar student populations and spend the same amount per student can achieve dramatically different results with the respect to student performance. The analysis also shows that although the state allocates more money for high-need students, within some districts, schools serving higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students are spending less per student than schools within the same district serving fewer disadvantaged students. The analysis was conducted using [a tool MBAE created that allows users to compare newly-available school-level spending information](#).

### School spending and the percentage of students on grade level in math | *Massachusetts elementary schools*

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education analyzed newly-available school funding data to explore the complex relationship between school spending and student achievement and found there is little correlation between spending and the percentage of students on grade level. Each circle below represents a Massachusetts elementary school. Use your mouse to hover over a circle to find out more about it. You can also use the filters on the right to examine specific school districts and focus on schools based on the demographic characteristics of their students.

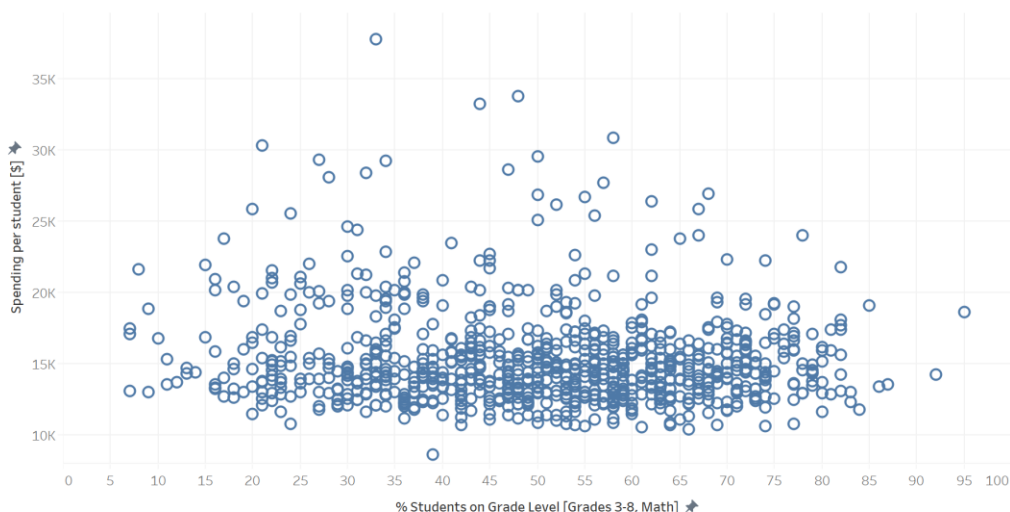
Select a district

% Low Income Students  
0 94

% English Language Learners  
0 83

% Special Education Students  
0 100

See spending and student socio-economic status



Switch to English language arts achievement:

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act legislation, states are now required to publicly report spending by school. Until this provision, only district-level spending was made available. MBAE created this tool to enable comparisons of school-level spending, allowing users to determine whether resources are allocated fairly. Users can also examine the relationship between school spending and school outcomes.

### **More spending doesn't necessarily lead to better outcomes**

MBAE's analysis of the data found little correlation between spending and student outcomes. One example, an elementary school in Winchendon spending \$13,644 per student and serving 38% low-income students, 2% ELL, and 18% special education students has only 31% on grade level in math, while a school in Revere spending \$13,913 per student and serving 43% low-income students, 26% ELL and 20% special education students has 67% on grade level in math. By comparison, other elementary schools with 67% of students on grade level spend as little as \$12,567 per student and as much as \$25,884 per student.

"The data raises important questions that must be asked and answered," said Edward Lambert Jr. Executive Director of MBAE. "It also confirms what MBAE has been saying – that money alone does not guarantee better outcomes," said Lambert.

All of the schools in the graph below serve between 30-35% economically disadvantaged students, 5-10% English Language Learners, and 10-20% special education students. Spending per student at the four highlighted schools is within \$25, but the percentage of students on grade level according to MCAS math results, varies widely (statewide 48% of students are on grade level in math).

District	School	Spending per Student	Students on Grade Level in Math (%)	Economically disadvantaged students (%)	English Language Learners (%)	Special Education Students (%)	Grades Served
Easthampton	Center School	\$12,265	39	30	6	19	K-4
Peabody	Center School	\$12,754	52	31	7	15	K-5
Taunton	Edmund Hatch Bennett School	\$13,161	47	33	5	11	K-4
Sunderland	Sunderland Elementary School	\$13,264	60	30	6	18	K-6
Woburn	Mary D Altavesta School	\$14,590	51	31	10	13	K-5
Barnstable	Barnstable United Elementary	\$14,731	44	32	7	13	4-5
Ludlow	Chapin Street Elementary	\$14,747	30	32	6	16	2-3
Rockland	R. Stewart Esten Elementary	\$14,753	53	35	6	13	1-4
Woburn	Linscott-Rumford School	\$15,361	62	31	8	11	K-5
Woburn	Goodyear Elementary School	\$15,475	42	32	5	11	K-5
Agawam	Clifford M Granger School	\$15,633	67	33	7	19	K-4
Gateway	Littleville Elementary School	\$15,881	46	33	5	19	PK-4
Mashpee	Quashnet School	\$16,545	53	30	5	17	3-6

### **Money intended for low-income students doesn't always get to them**

Our analysis also found that although the state's foundation budget, upon which the chapter 70 funding formula is based, calls for spending nearly \$4,000 more for each economically-disadvantaged student, districts don't always allocate funding to their local schools that reflect this intent. In Brockton, the school with the highest percentages of low-income and ELL students is spending the least. In Chelmsford, spending is lower in schools that serve higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students. In New Bedford, the school

serving 81% of economically-disadvantaged students, the highest percentage in the district, spends only \$71 more per student than the school serving 39%, the lowest in the district.

“Money isn’t always getting to the students who need it the most,” said Edward Lambert Jr. executive director of MBAE. “We’ve got to take steps to ensure funding is fairly and equitably distributed.”

There are also districts where more funding does go to schools with higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students. It’s also quite common for funding to be very similar for all schools in a district, regardless of differences in student demographics.

“There are sometimes good reasons for all of the variations in spending. We’re making this information available to spur important conversations about why these disparities exist,” Lambert said.

The analysis comes out as state policymakers debate a school funding reform bill that could add up to \$1.5 billion in spending on education. Three bills have been filed that would increase funding levels for low-income students and English Language Learners in an effort to close educational achievement gaps.

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education and our statewide partners and affiliates around the state have been calling on legislators to couple new spending with measures that ensure the money is used efficiently and effectively to serve our highest need students.

#### **About the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education**

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) was founded in 1988 by employers concerned about the educational attainment and skills of graduates entering the workforce. Driven by the business community’s commitment that all students graduate high school prepared for success in college, career and citizenship, our core work is influencing state education policy to improve the quality of all public schools in Massachusetts.

###