

ISBE'S WEEKLY MESSAGE

From Illinois State Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders

FEDERAL FUNDS UPDATE & FY 2026 EBF ALLOCATIONS

Dear Colleagues:

This is a message of good news for districts on the funding front. Beginning the week of July 28, the U.S. Department of Education began releasing funding for the current federal fiscal year for Title programs (Title I-C, ESEA: Migrant Student Education; Title IIA, ESEA: Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants; Title III-A, ESEA: English Language Acquisition; and Title IV-A, ESEA: Student Support and Academic Enrichment State Grants). Thank you to all who reached out to members of Congress and the U.S. Department of Education to advocate alongside ISBE for the release of these funds. Watch for updates in IWAS/MyISBE for grant applications to be released over the next several weeks and for additional information on when applications for these funds will be due.

Like federal funds, critically important to all Illinois schools is the release of fiscal year 2026 allocations for Evidence-Based Funding (EBF). Join me in extending our thanks to Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly for their continued commitment to equitable school funding. Under the EBF formula, every district receives at least the same amount of funding as last year. For FY 2026, Illinois lawmakers appropriated an additional \$307 million in EBF -- \$301.8 million EBF Tier funding, to be distributed based on district need, with 99% of the new funds going to the state's highest-need districts, plus another \$5.2 million specifically earmarked to support new alternative schools to serve students with specialized needs. This year's EBF investment does reflect a pause in funding for the Property Tax Relief Grant, which has typically been allocated \$50 million.

These investments bring the total so far for Evidence-Based Funding to \$8.9 billion over the past nine years. What makes this investment so much more meaningful is its laser focus on funding schools with the highest needs. Equity is at the heart of Illinois' funding model. While we recognize the path to full funding adequacy is ongoing, the data continues to show clear progress since the start of EBF. The formula considers enrollment, student demographics, local funding capacity, and 34 cost factors outlined in statute to ensure funding is responsive and equitable. This sustained investment is helping to reverse decades of inequity in how schools were funded.

Nine years of investments in EBF have raised the funding floor, accomplishing the main goal of EBF, which is to direct increases in state funding toward districts with the greatest need. The number of fully funded districts -- those at or above 90% adequacy -- has grown from 194 in FY 2018 to 313 in FY 2026.

The disbursement of EBF to districts will begin on Aug. 10. You can review your district's Percentage of Adequacy, Tier, and EBF allocation for FY 2026 on the [ISBE website](#).

At a time when our federal funding continues to be under attack, we are lucky in Illinois to have a governor and legislature that prioritizes investments in students, teachers, and families.

On a personal note, I wanted to share that I was invited by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to be a keynote speaker at their annual policy forum held a few weeks ago. They specifically wanted me to honor my father, Dr. Ted Sanders, former Illinois Superintendent of Education, who retired from the presidency of ECS in 2005. As I near the one-year mark of my father's passing, I hope you don't mind me sharing the [link to the video tribute](#).

All my best,
Tony

Dr. Tony Sanders
State Superintendent of Education