



V.

# EDUCATION

# Education

## OVERVIEW

The FY27 Boston Public Schools (BPS) budget builds a foundation for the future. A robust \$1.73 billion in funding will support approximately 47,000 students at BPS, and another \$306 million will support approximately 10,100 Boston students in charter schools.

An increase of \$88.3 million, or 5.4%, over the current FY26 BPS operating budget supports the district's aim to provide a high-quality experience for every student regardless of school, program, or neighborhood. This FY27 growth includes funding to sustain extensive previous year investments and to meet rising costs in areas such as health insurance, collective bargaining agreements, out-of-district placements, and other annual expenses. Boston's FY27 education budget, including the BPS operating budget and the city's charter school tuition assessment, represents roughly 41% of the City's budget as a whole.

Thanks to several years of strong fiscal stewardship, this budget meets students' needs and focuses on core priorities. Ninety-four percent is allocated to student services including school budgets and just over 6% is allocated to the Central Office. In addition to net new funding, the district identified \$23 million in cost savings from school closures and reconfigurations, \$25 million in staff reductions due to enrollment declines, and another \$34 million in Central Office efficiencies. These savings will be reallocated into BPS classrooms and student and family support.

The FY27 budget maintains investment in three areas that align with the School Committee's priorities: Accelerating Academic Performance, Ensuring Access for All Students, and Consistency in High-Quality Learning Opportunities.

Accelerating Academic performance means ensuring every student has a high-quality academic experience, a continued focus on equitable literacy, and high-quality instructional materials available at all schools.

Ensuring Access for All aims to continue the district's rollout and commitment to inclusive education, expanding programs for multilingual learners, and effectively serving the diverse BPS population.

Consistency in High-Quality Learning Opportunities refers to the implementation of the long-term facilities plan, bolstering access to high quality seats and student experiences, academically rigorous and culturally affirming learning experiences, opportunities for personal wellness and enrichment, a network of adults to support students, and a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment.

# BPS OPERATING BUDGET

At a \$1.73 billion appropriation, the FY27 operating budget (Table 2) follows substantial budgetary increases over the past five years. The FY27 allocation sustains prior years' investments towards achieving a fully-inclusive, high-performing district for the benefit of all students. As such, the FY27 BPS budget will promote strong student outcomes, close opportunity gaps, and eliminate disparities in achievement that are shared by large urban districts across Massachusetts and the nation as a whole.

**Table 1: BPS Operating Budget Summary**

	<b>FY26 Current</b>	<b>FY27 Recom</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>
<b>Direct School Expenses</b>	<b>\$1.015B</b>	<b>\$1.055B</b>	<b>\$40M</b>
<b>School Services Budgeted Centrally</b>	<b>\$417M</b>	<b>\$470M</b>	<b>\$53M</b>
<b>Central Administration</b>	<b>\$133M</b>	<b>\$111M</b>	<b>-\$22M</b>
<b>Non-BPS Student Services</b>	<b>\$73M</b>	<b>\$90M</b>	<b>\$17M</b>
<b>Total BPS Budget</b>	<b>\$1.64B</b>	<b>\$1.73B</b>	<b>\$88M</b>

Looking at spending categories, funding directly in schools is increasing by \$40 million over the FY26 budget to \$1.055 billion.

In addition to school budgets, schools receive significant support from services that are budgeted centrally. These services include transportation, particular special education services, and facilities maintenance. The centrally budgeted services portion of the budget is increasing about 13% over the FY26 budget to \$470 million. With these support funds added to funds budgeted at the school level, \$1.52 billion is expected to be spent on services felt at BPS schools, 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 vocational education, and pre-kindergarten students at community-based organizations (CBOs). In addition, BPS provides transportation for out-of-district special education students, and these costs comprise approximately 19% of the FY27 BPS transportation budget. Total funds budgeted for non-BPS students will increase from the FY26 budget to \$89 million, comprising around 5% of the overall FY26 BPS Adopted budget.

In FY27, the Central Administration budget will decrease by 16.5% to \$111 million. These changes are driven by spending efficiencies such as a reduced reliance on outside vendors for student meals. BPS Central Administration ensures organizational effectiveness, accountability, and strong coordination and support for students from district leadership.

In FY27 Boston Public Schools will dedicate funding to the following key initiatives: Inclusion, Dual Language Programs, and Alternative Education.

FY27 marks the fourth year of Boston's five-year inclusion rollout. The FY27 expansion will reach classrooms in grades 3, 4, and 11. Supported by the new Reimagine School Funding formula, every school will be equipped with sufficient funding to meet the needs of their student population.

The FY27 BPS appropriation will further Boston's commitment to multilingual learners. The Boston Public Schools will introduce six new classrooms across four schools as part of the continued rollout of dual language programs. The new RSF formula also guarantees paraprofessional support in all dual language classrooms for grades 1 and 2 to support foundational literacy. Additionally, BPS central offices will work with schools to procure resources related to core curriculum and digital access and to plan professional development.

Also in FY27, BPS will review its alternative program offerings to ensure resources are being maximized for student success. Designated programming at ABCD University High School and Greater Egleston High School will expand district capacity to support students with emotional impairments. Additionally, Boston Adult and Technical Academy (BATA) will adjust its grade configurations at both locations to serve under-credited 16 and 17-year-old students. These efforts will increase equitable pathways to high-quality, alternative education for multilingual students.

Finally, new FY27 funding will cover increased costs for Out-of-District Tuition and Transportation, Health Insurance cost increases, collective bargaining agreements, and Special Education related services. Cost growth in Health Insurance alone will exceed \$48 million; controlling for Health Insurance, the rest of the BPS budget is growing at a more modest rate of 2.7%.

## **Early Childhood Education**

The City continues to offer quality pre-kindergarten seats as part of the Boston Pre-K initiative. In the 2026-2027 school year, approximately 4,508 three- and four-year-olds are expected to be enrolled in a quality pre-kindergarten program. This includes 3,172 BPS K0 and K1 seats and 1,336 Community Based Organization (CBO) K0 and K1 seats. The City's Quality Pre-K Fund enabled and accelerated this expansion over several years, and an ongoing 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. Changes since Mayor Wu took office include updating the funding model from seats to classrooms, opening participation to three-year-olds, and 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 has shown that BPS pre-kindergarten attendees outperform their peers in third and fifth grade MCAS, in both ELA and Math.

## **Special Education**

The FY27 BPS budget makes robust investments in special education through the Office of Specialized Services and Direct School Staffing, assessing classroom composition and using formulas to determine staffing needs. The special education budget totals over \$476 million in FY27, an increase of \$19.6 million, or 4.2%, from the FY26 budget. The special education budget accounts for nearly a quarter of the total BPS budget and supports the roughly 11,000 students with disabilities, or a little more than 23% of the BPS student population.

The significant increase in special education spending in the FY27 budget aligns with the continued inclusion rollout across the district and into new grade levels, as well as commitments made in the district's systemic improvement plan agreement with the Commonwealth.

In addition to mainstream or substantially separate placements in the district, BPS is responsible for the educational services of special education students in out-of-district placements. Over time, BPS has seen an increase in the number of high-need students and Department of Children & Families (DCF)-involved students placed in group homes who require private placement. BPS expects to be fully or partly responsible for paying for services for approximately 400 students, at a total projected cost of \$55.6 million in FY27. Some of the costs for these services will be reimbursed by the State's Circuit Breaker Program designed to relieve districts of extraordinary special education costs. Tuition rates for placements 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 FY27 budget continues to fund a proportionate share team responsible for conducting IEP meetings and evaluations.

## **English Learners**

The Bilingual/Sheltered English Immersion budget totals \$113.8 million in FY27, a decrease of \$14.1 million, or -11%, from the FY26 budget. Approximately a third (33%) of BPS students have an ELL designation; as a group, they hail from approximately 140 different countries and speak 82 languages. This year's Bilingual/Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) budget decrease is due to a combination of re-coding positions and changing how educators are classified in BPS systems, as well as updates in the number of minutes required, changes in the definition for SEI classrooms, and consolidation of classrooms as a result of enrollment declines.

## **BPS Enrollment**

Student enrollment is foundational to the BPS budget. The projected enrollment at each school for the upcoming school year informs, among other factors, the allocation of resources at the school level. The FY27 budget development process required close collaboration between school leaders and BPS Finance to develop accurate enrollment projections.

The district has seen steady enrollment decline over the last 7 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.

## **Reimagine School Funding**

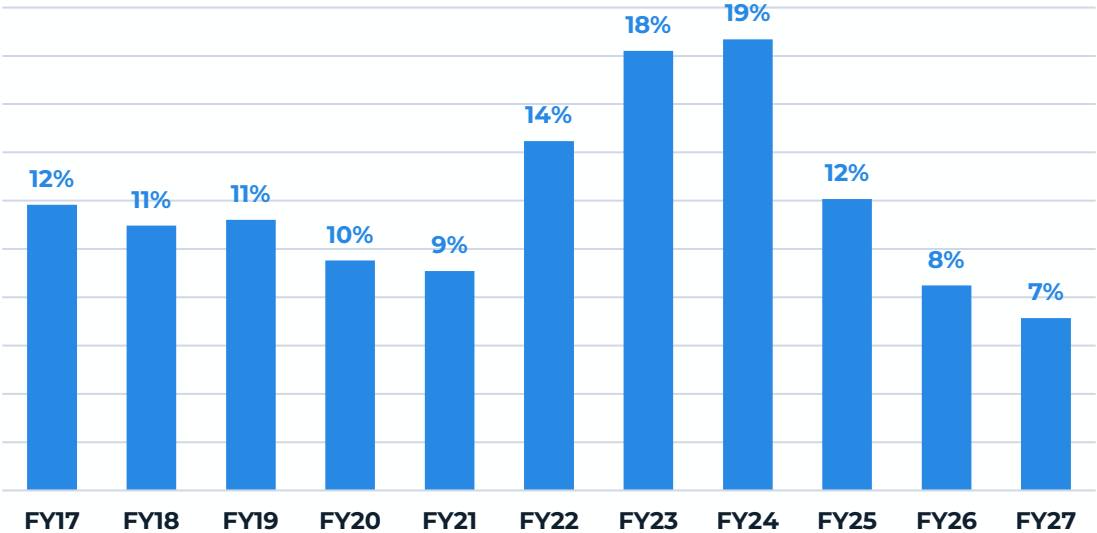
FY27 marks a more decisive transition away from Weighted Student Funding (WSF) as BPS implements a new approach, Reimagine School Funding. The weighted student funding model created a baseline per-student funding amount and then adjusted the amount depending on individual student need and calculated a school's budget by adding the individual amounts for every student projected to attend plus a baseline funding amount. Under WSF, enrollment declines tended to compound over time in the highest needs schools as they lost funding. In contrast, RSF is a rules-based spending formula that ensures every school can meet the needs of their student body even where enrollment may be declining.

RSF creates allocations for two different types of spending. The first is expenses that are compliance-based such as classroom teachers, ESL staff, nurses, social workers. BPS central office works closely with each school during the budget development process to determine the level of student need and funding allocation needed to fully meet these basic requirements. The second type of allocation is flexible spending, which is provided on a dollar per pupil basis similar to WSF. Schools can use this funding to make localized decisions about how to best serve their students, such as through partnerships or special programming.

## **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, and at \$134.2M represent 7.2% of total funding in FY27, down from 12% in FY17 (Figure 1). A surge in federal funding amidst the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, decreased external funding is a challenge to BPS's long-term financial stability, with the BPS budget relying on increased City appropriations to help absorb costs.

**Figure 1: External Funds as % of Total Funds FY15-25 Actuals, FY26 Appropriation, FY27 Recommended**



One of the largest sources of federal revenue for BPS is the Title I entitlement grant. BPS expects to leverage \$42.4 million in Title I revenue in FY27. 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.

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 \$36.2 million in Circuit Breaker revenue in FY27. 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 almost \$22 million in IDEA funds available in FY27.

Targeted Assistance Grants: In FY27, BPS will apply for \$640K funding 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 FY27, 44 BPS schools may be eligible for this funding. As Targeted Assistance 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 FY26 budget included \$610K in funding to transition Brighton High, Condon Elementary, English High, Excel High, Grew Elementary,

Madison Park High, and Mason Elementary where previous school improvement grants had ended or funding was tapering.

## **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 six anchor goals: eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, accelerate learning, amplify all voices, expand opportunity, cultivate trust, and activate partnerships. Each goal was paired with a series of aligned metrics to measure progress. Entering FY27, BPS will continue to evaluate its progress towards academic goals using measurable outcomes.

### **Graduation Rates**

The overall four-year graduation rate for the BPS class of 2025 was 81.3%, a slight increase compared to the 2024 rate. The graduation rate increased about 11 percentage points over a decade, from 70.7% in 2015.

In 2025 nineteen Boston high schools achieved graduation rates of 80% or above: Dearborn 6-12 STEM Academy, East Boston High School, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, Lyon High School, TechBoston Academy, Excel High School, Boston Arts Academy, English High School, Snowden International High School, Fenway High School, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, Margarita Muniz Academy, Boston Green Academy, O'Bryant School of Math & Science, New Mission High School, Quincy Upper School, and Kennedy Academy for Health Careers.

### **Dropout Rate**

The overall dropout rate for grades 9-12 in school year 2024-2025 was 3.6%. BPS cut the dropout rate by 4.3 percentage points relative to a decade earlier, with a decrease of more than 200 students dropping out annually from the decade prior.

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, determining 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 in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; for 2021-2022 DESE pursued an "accountability lite" model featuring published data but no determinations. For the 2024-2025

school year accountability classifications resumed, with BPS being assessed as “Not requiring assistance or intervention” based on substantial progress toward targets. Meanwhile in 2025, six BPS schools were named Schools of Recognition: Kennedy Patrick J Elementary School, Grew Elementary School, Philbrick Elementary School, New Mission High School, Boston Latin Academy, and Boston Latin School.

In 2025, fifteen BPS schools were rated as meeting or exceeding targets including six recognition schools: Holmes Elementary School, Hernandez K-8 School, Winthrop Elementary School, Otis Elementary School, Alighieri Dante Montessori School, Bradley Elementary School, Perry Elementary School, Kennedy Patrick J Elementary School, Grew Elementary School, Philbrick Elementary School, New Mission High School, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, and UP Academy Holland.

In addition to this, 32 schools have been identified as making substantial progress towards target: Blackstone Elementary School, Condon K-8 School, Curley K-8 School, Dearborn 6-12 STEM Academy, Dever Elementary School, Edison Elementary School, Eliot K-8 Innovation School, Greenwood Sarah K-8 School, Hale Elementary School, Haley Pilot School, Hennigan K-8 School, Higginson-Lewis K-8 School, Hurley K-8 School, Kenny Elementary School, Lee K-8 School, Lyndon K-8 School, Manning Elementary School, Mario Umana Academy, Mason Elementary School, Mattahunt Elementary School, Mozart Elementary School, O'Bryant School of Math & Science, O'Donnell Elementary School, Ohrenberger School, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, Perkins Elementary School, Quincy Elementary School, Roosevelt K-8 School, Trotter Elementary School, Warren-Prescott K-8 School, Winship Elementary School, and Young Achievers K-8 School.

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, to continue to address systemic barriers to equity across the school system, and to 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 also committed to a long-term initiative and developed a plan for improving services to English learners and to 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 succeeded the 2020 agreement with DESE and focused on many of the same areas, as well as student safety, facilities, and data integrity. The City worked diligently to meet the commitments stipulated by the commonwealth, and the formal engagement ended in June 2025.

## **BPS CAPITAL**

The City is committed to modernizing Boston's Public Schools' infrastructure. With City bond funds and a strong working relationship with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the Capital Plan includes 40 BPS projects and programs with a total budget over \$1.2 billion.

Implementation of the Long-Term Facilities Improvements Plan for Boston Public Schools will result in new school buildings and major transformations, reconfigurations to predominantly align schools with preK-6 and grade 7-12 pathways, and increased investments district-wide for all school buildings and communities.

These projects build off of success already seen across the city, including the recently completed Sarah Roberts School, the relocation of the Horace Mann to a fully renovated facility, and the completion of the expansion of the PJ Kennedy. Additional renovations are underway at the Frederick School and Brighton High, helping to facilitate successful mergers, grade alignments, and additional planning work.

Boston's successful partnership with the MSBA also continues. In the past four years, BPS has opened three new schools in collaboration: the Boston Arts Academy, the Josiah Quincy Upper School, and the Carter School. Three additional schools are in the pipeline in various stages of study and design: the Shaw-Taylor Elementary School, the Ruth Batson Academy, and the Madison Park Technical Vocational High School.

The City will also continue district-wide state of good repair investments in window replacements, HVAC upgrades, roof repairs, bathroom renovations, fire systems, radiator covers, entryway improvements, plumbing and fixture upgrades to expand drinking water availability, school yards, security improvements, and technology infrastructure. Many of these projects have been, will be, and/or are presently included within the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program. With seven projects currently underway and another accepted in the 2025 round, Boston Public Schools is on a clear path to ensuring that all facilities are high quality.

For additional information on Education investments in the Capital Plan, please see Volume IV Chapter 1.

## **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 10,122 Boston students in FY27. Boston is assessed by the Commonwealth to fund charter schools on a per-pupil basis,

and the City's FY27 charter school tuition assessment is projected to increase by \$9.8 million to a total of \$306.2 million primarily due to Foundation Budget increases, and low income and special education enrollment increases.

Entering FY27, Boston faces continued financial strain due to the escalating charter school assessment, which has nearly tripled since the 2010 Achievement Gap legislation. While the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), passed in 2019, initially promised increased state education aid and full charter school reimbursement, Boston remains a minimum aid community. The Commonwealth successfully funded the SOA beginning in FY22. However, projections for FY27 indicate that despite these efforts, state education aid is expected to remain insufficient. Specifically, charter tuition costs are anticipated to substantially outpace the combined allocation of charter reimbursement and Chapter 70 aid, resulting in a negative balance. See the Revenue Estimates and Analysis section of Volume I for more details on state education aid and charter school tuition reimbursement.

More information on the FY27 Boston Public Schools budget may be found at:

<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/about-bps/budget/fy2027-budget-development>.

