Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

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Student Opportunity Act Implementation: A 3-Year Progress Report

Introduction

In November 2019, *An Act Relative to Educational Opportunity for Students* (Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019) was signed into law by Governor Charlie Baker. Better known as the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), the new law represented the largest reform to education financing in Massachusetts in nearly 25 years.

The goals of the Student Opportunity Act were expansive, and the final bill included a range of education policy initiatives; from improving access to financial literacy curriculum to studying the unique financial challenges of rural school districts. But above all else, the SOA aimed to dramatically increase the resources available for the highest need school districts across the state and create a data-driven structure to accurately assess how those resources were being used to close persistent disparities in student achievement. At full implementation, the SOA was projected to increase funding for public school districts across the state by over $1.5 billion.[1]

When the bill was signed into law, the state committed to reaching full implementation by Fiscal Year (FY) 2027. Now, more than halfway through that implementation schedule, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (MTF) is offering an assessment on the progress that has been made in meeting the primary objectives of the law. To that end, this report aims to answer two questions:

1. Is the Student Opportunity Act directing significant new resources to the highest need districts across the state?

2. Are there suitable data collection and reporting requirements in place to allow policymakers and the public to identify how these new resources are being used in support of improved student outcomes and achievement, and can that information inform future policy action?

To provide a complete assessment, this report begins with a review of the Student Opportunity Act; including a brief background on the basics of public education financing in Massachusetts, and the circumstances that led to the law's passage. The report then presents MTF's analyses on the state's progress in achieving the SOA's main objectives, answering the two questions above. Lastly, the report concludes with a series of recommendations to improve the structures in place to connect increased investment to improved student outcomes. It also previews how these recommendations could help to inform discussions surrounding school finance challenges that lay ahead, particularly related to the municipal contribution components of the education finance formula.

Inherent in the original Education Reform Act of 1993 was the importance of ongoing evaluation and reflection on how Massachusetts serves its students and prepares them for future college and career success. Assessing our ability to answer key questions regarding how Student Opportunity

[1] https://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/with-education-bill-signing-cheers-and-challenges/

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Act resources are being spent in support of students and whether those investments are driving improved student performance is paramount to maintaining Massachusetts' high standard of educational excellence. Absent this analysis, the state risks completing the largest investment in its public schools in a generation without understanding what has been accomplished.

Background on Education Finance Reform

In Massachusetts, funding for public schools is constitutionally recognized as the shared responsibility of local municipalities and the state. Since 1993, the total amount of funding that is required to provide all students with an adequate and equitable education has been calculated by the '*foundation budget formula*.' The foundation budget formula is calculated at the individual district and statewide level by multiplying student enrollment by per-pupil cost estimates across a range of educational spending categories and demographic factors. The cost of a district's foundation budget is then split between the municipality and the state based on local wealth factors like property values and income that determine a municipality's ability to pay. The funding that a municipality is required to contribute towards its foundation budget is known as its '*required local contribution*,' and the state support they receive is known as '*Chapter 70 state aid*.'

Leading up to the passage of the Student Opportunity Act, it had become generally accepted that the foundation budget formula was failing to accurately account for the costs of providing all students with a high-quality education. Acknowledgement of this reality was in large part due to a pair of reports released by the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, which highlighted that the then 20-year old formula was underestimating the actual cost to educate students by billions of dollars annually. In *Cutting Class: Underfunding the Foundation Budget's Core Education Program,* the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center noted that in FY 2010, the foundation budget underestimated core special education costs by $1 billion and health insurance costs by $1.1 billion.[2] In the same year, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, in *School Funding Reality: A Bargain Not Kept,* asserted that the inflation adjustment factor in the foundation budget formula failed to keep up with actual school costs, and was resulting in a budget shortfall of almost $1.7 billion.[3]

To further examine these school funding failures, in the FY 2015 state budget, the Legislature created the Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC). The commission was instructed to "review the way foundation budgets are calculated," and in doing so, determine "the educational programs and services necessary to achieve the commonwealth's educational goals and to prepare students to achieve passing scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System examinations."[4] In its final report, published in October 2015, the FBRC provided detailed recommendations on how to address the inadequacies of the foundation budget formula, including updates to four of its key cost assumptions for: (1) low-income students; (2) English language learners; (3) in-district and out-of-district special education services; and (4) employee benefits and health insurance. The report further emphasized that differences between foundation budget assumptions and actual school

[2] Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, *"Cutting Class: Underfunding the Foundation Budget's Core Education Program."* 2011. Page 2.

[3] Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, *"School Funding Reality: Bargain Not Kept."* 2010. Page 2.

[4] FY 2015 State Budget, Section 124, https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2015/FinalBudget.

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spending were most harmful to high-needs districts facing increased pressure to help students meet proficiency standards.[5]

The Goals of the Student Opportunity Act

The Student Opportunity Act addressed each of the recommendations of the FBRC, and included additional policy proposals to examine or improve the distribution and equity of state funding for other education programs. For example, in addition to updating the per-pupil cost assumptions within the foundation budget formula, the SOA also expanded the Special Education Circuit Breaker[6] program to reimburse school districts for the high costs of transporting students to out-of-district approved special education schools and created a special commission to study the long-term fiscal health of rural school districts. Nevertheless, the overarching goals of the SOA were clear:

1. To align foundation budget cost assumptions with actual school spending trends and substantially increase the amount of funding directed towards the highest-need districts across the state.

2. To create a data-driven reporting structure to effectively identify how increased investments are being used to close persistent disparities in student achievement; preparing students for college and career success in the 21st Century.

The primary goals of the Student Opportunity Act were made apparent through the specific adjustments the law made to the foundation budget formula and by the data collection and reporting requirements it detailed for districts.

SOA Goal #1: Substantially increase funding for high-needs districts.

Each of the adjustments that the SOA made to the per-pupil cost assumptions in the foundation budget formula increased the amount of funding required to be spent by municipalities and the state to provide all students with an adequate education. But to drive targeted investment towards the highest-need districts across the state, the SOA included three specific formula adjustments.

1. **The law updated the statutory definition of "low-income,"** a designation within the foundation budget formula that determines if a student qualifies for an additional low-income per-pupil aid increment. Prior to the SOA, a student was designated as low-income if their family's income was less than 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Under the SOA, the low-income FPL threshold was increased to 185 percent. Increasing this threshold allowed for a greater number of students across districts to be identified as "low-income" and qualify for additional per-pupil aid.

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[5] Foundation Budget Review Commission, "*Final Report.*" 2015. Page 4.

[6] The Special Education Circuit Breaker program reimburses school districts for the extraordinary costs of providing specialized education services to students; most notably, tuition payments to out-of-district special education schools.

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2. **The law created 12 new "low-income groups,"** to which districts are assigned based on the percent of their student body that meets the statutorily defined low-income threshold. Based on the low-income group to which a district is assigned, students qualify for incrementally larger low-income per-pupil aid increments. Before the SOA, districts were organized into ten economically-disadvantaged deciles, with decile ten encompassing districts where 50 to 100 percent of students met the 133 percent FPL threshold. The shift to 12 low-income groups under the SOA aimed to achieve two goals. First, it established that the cost of providing specialized services to low-income students grows as the number of students who require those services in a district increases; and second, it allowed for greater stratification between districts that educate large shares of low-income students. Figure 1 shows the organization of economically-disadvantaged deciles and low-income groups before and after the passage of the SOA.

Figure 1. Low-Income Groups Before and After the SOA (FY 2020)

Pre-SOA[7]		Post-SOA	
Decile	**% of Students Meeting Low-Income Threshold**	**Group**	**% of Students Meeting Low-Income Threshold**
Decile 1	0.00% - 9.00%	Group 1	0 - 5.99%
Decile 2	9.01% - 12.00%	Group 2	6.00 - 11.99%
Decile 3	12.01% - 18.00%	Group 3	12.00% - 17.99%
Decile 4	18.01% - 22.00%	Group 4	18.00% - 23.99%
Decile 5	22.01% - 27.00%	Group 5	24.00% - 29.99%
Decile 6	27.01% - 31.00%	Group 6	30.00% - 35.99%
Decile 7	31.01% - 35.00%	Group 7	36.00% - 41.99%
Decile 8	35.01% - 43.00%	Group 8	42.00% - 47.99%
Decile 9	43.01% - 50.00%	Group 9	48.00% - 53.99%
Decile 10	50.01% - 100.00%	Group 10	54.00% - 69.99%
		Group 11	70.00% - 79.99%
		Group 12	80.00% - 100.00%

3. **The law increased the foundation budget per-pupil aid increments for English learners and low-income students.** In the foundation budget formula, all students are assigned a per-pupil "base rate" based on their grade level. If a student is identified as an English learner (EL) or as low-income, additional per-pupil aid increments are added to the base rate to reflect the increased costs associated with educating that student. Under the SOA, the incremental per-pupil aid amounts for English learners and low-income students were increased substantially. Figure 2 illustrates the increase to the EL per-pupil increments across grade levels, and offers an example of the increase to the low-income per-pupil aid increments for districts in low-income groups 6, 8, and 10.

[7] Prior to the passage of the SOA, economically-disadvantaged deciles were re-calculated each year based on demographic changes. The decile groupings displayed in this table were from FY 2020, which was the final budget passed prior to the passage of the SOA.

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Figure 2. EL and Low-Income Per-Pupil Increments Before and After the SOA

	FY 2020 (pre-SOA)	FY 2020 (full-SOA)	$ Growth	% Growth
English learners PK-5	$2,275.85	$2,537.48	$261.63	11.5%
English learners 6-8	$2,380.50	$2,721.46	$340.96	14.3%
English learners high school	$1,858.15	$3,265.74	$1,407.59	75.8%
Low-Income Group 6	$4,190.48	$4,926.75	$736.27	17.6%
Low-Income Group 8	$4,389.97	$5,982.46	$1,592.49	36.3%
Low-Income Group 10	$4,589.49	$7,038.21	$2,448.72	53.4%

Figures in FY 2020 Dollars

In addition to the three formula adjustments described above, the SOA updated other elements of the foundation budget formula to direct increased state aid toward districts. Other changes included increases to the per-pupil rates for employee benefits and fixed charges, guidance and psychological services, and out-of-district special education; as well as adjustments to the assumed enrollment rates for special education students in comprehensive and vocational schools. All of these changes would result in new state support for school districts, but the most targeted increases were those related to low-income and English learner students. See Appendix A for a complete table of foundation budget per-pupil rates before and after the implementation of the SOA, in FY 2020 dollars.

SOA Goal #2: Create a data-driven reporting structure that connects increased investments to evidence-based practices, and eventually improved student outcomes.

To connect the substantial new investments being made in public schools to improved student opportunities and achievement, the SOA laid out a multi-pronged approach to establish student performance targets, improve district data collection, and strengthen reporting requirements.

First, the new law required the creation of statewide and district targets for addressing persistent gaps in achievement across various student populations. At the state level, the commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the "department") was directed to establish targets for students in the aggregate and for specific subgroups, including by grade level, subject matter, and demographic group. Districts were then directed to create local targets that were consistent with those set by the department.

Second, to ensure that progress was being made towards meeting the statewide and district targets, the SOA required districts to develop three-year plans to meet their student outcome goals. These plans, referred to as "SOA District Plans," would be created by district superintendents in consultation with school committees, parents, and community members. While the department was given authority over the final form of the SOA District Plans, the law laid out four specific requirements. The plans must include:

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1. A description of how the district will use its Chapter 70 state aid in support of the plan, including an explanation of how the funding will support the needs of EL and low-income students;
2. A description of the evidence-based programs, supports, and interventions that the school district will implement to address gaps in student achievement across different subgroups;
3. A description of the outcome metrics that the district will rely upon to measure success in closing gaps in achievement among student subgroups; and
4. A description of how the district will increase parent engagement; particularly among parents of low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

Districts were statutorily required to submit their SOA District Plans to the department every three years. Annually, districts must submit supplemental materials to the department, including relevant data and any amendments to the three-year plan that are necessary to ensuring that the district is successful in meeting the goals identified.

Lastly, the SOA established a data advisory commission to make recommendations to the department regarding the use of state and local data to inform resource allocation, assess student needs, and monitor gaps in student achievement. In addition to improving the processes by which the department and districts use data to inform decision making, the commission was directed to offer recommendations on the creation of a new data collection and reporting system that would allow policymakers and the public to track how spending was targeting the needs of EL and low-income students. [8]

Figure 3. Data Collection & Reporting Requirements in the SOA

SOA Requirement	Bill Section	MGL Citation
Statewide & District Targets for Student Achievement Gaps	Section 5	Section 1S of Chapter 69
SOA 3-Year District Plans & Amendments	Section 5	Section 1S of Chapter 69
Data Advisory Commission	Section 15	Section 17 of Chapter 70

Together, these three elements of the SOA aimed to create a straightforward structure to connect increased state and local investment to improved student outcomes. The department, districts, and larger stakeholder community were empowered to work collaboratively to develop a data collection and reporting process that would allow policymakers and the public to easily track how new funding would close student achievement and opportunity gaps over time.

The first two sections of this report provided background on the education financing system in Massachusetts and described the primary objectives of the SOA. In the sections that follow, MTF assesses the state's progress in meeting those goals; first, by identifying the districts that have received the largest increases in state aid due to the reforms of the law, and second, by evaluating

[8] Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019, Section 15. MGL: Section 17 of Chapter 70. https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter70/Section17

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the information and data that is available to track how these resources are being used in support of students.

SOA Goal #1: Substantially Increase State Aid for the Highest Need Districts

To assess the state's progress in meeting the first objective of the SOA – substantially increase funding for the highest-need districts across the state – MTF evaluated how foundation budgets and Chapter 70 state aid have changed during the first three years of SOA implementation. This analysis was done at the statewide and district level, to demonstrate both the magnitude of new investment and to identify the districts that have experienced the most dramatic increases in state support.

Statewide Funding Trends

Foundation Budget

In the ten years prior to SOA implementation (FY 2011 – FY 2021), the statewide foundation budget grew from $8.9 billion to $11.6 billion, an increase of $2.7 billion (30 percent). Over the first three years of SOA implementation (FY 2021 – FY 2024), the statewide foundation budget grew from $11.6 billion to $13.9 billion, an increase of $2.3 billion (20 percent).

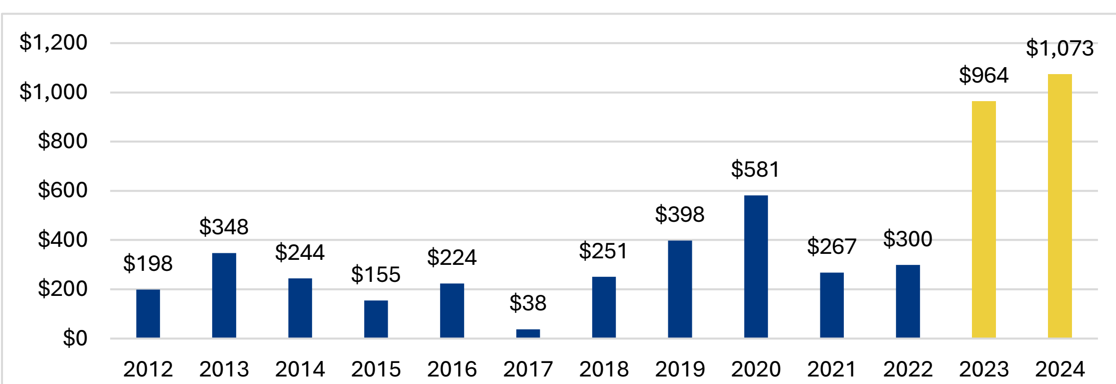
Figure 4. Statewide Foundation Budget Growth Trends

10-Years Before SOA		SOA Implementation, Years 1 - 3	
Fiscal Year	**Foundation Budget**	**Fiscal Year**	**Foundation Budget**
FY 2011	$8,921	FY 2021	$11,627
FY 2021	$11,627	FY 2024	$13,963
$ Growth	**$2,705**	**$ Growth**	**$2,337**
% Growth	**30%**	**% Growth**	**20%**

$ in millions

In less than one-third the amount of time, the statewide foundation budget increased by two-thirds of the margin that was experienced in the prior decade. In the second and third years of SOA implementation alone, the foundation budget grew by nearly $1 billion per year.

Figure 5. Annual Increases in the Statewide Foundation Budget (FY 2012 – FY 2024)



$ in millions

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However, while a large portion of this growth was related to SOA implementation, it's important to note that between FY 2021 and FY 2024, there were other factors influencing school finance trends; most notably inflation and student enrollment. At a basic level, these two factors had opposite effects on foundation budget growth. Due to the economic impacts of the pandemic, FY 2021 to FY 2024 was a period of high inflation; this contributed to larger increases to the per-pupil foundation budget rates and the overall foundation budget. During the same time period, student enrollment experienced a sharp decline. Because the foundation budget formula is a per-pupil funding model, the drop-off in student enrollment depressed overall foundation budget growth.

The overlapping effects of SOA implementation, inflation, and enrollment can pose challenges when evaluating the impacts of the new law. To isolate the specific impacts of the SOA's foundation budget reforms, MTF conducted a comparison between actual school finance trends ("Post-SOA") and estimates of how school finance trends may have looked had the SOA never been signed into law ("No-SOA"). The "No-SOA" estimates account for inflation and enrollment changes, thereby allowing us to isolate the effects of SOA reforms to the foundation budget.[9]

Figure 6. MTF Comparison of Actual v. Projected Statewide Foundation Budget Growth

No-SOA (Projected)		Post-SOA (Actual)	
Fiscal Year	**Foundation Budget**	**Fiscal Year**	**Foundation Budget**
FY 2021	$11,627	FY 2021	$11,627
FY 2024	$12,911	FY 2024	$13,963
$ Growth	**$1,285**	**$ Growth**	**$2,337**
% Growth	**11%**	**% Growth**	**20%**
SOA-driven Foundation Budget Growth: $1.052 billion.			

$ in millions

Absent the SOA, between FY 2021 and FY 2024, the statewide foundation budget would have increased by $1.3 billion (11 percent). Subtracting this figure from actual foundation budget growth during the same time period results in a $1 billion increase to the statewide foundation budget directly tied to SOA reforms.

This comparison, between the actual "Post-SOA" and the projected "No-SOA" world, will be repeated throughout the rest of this section assessing the state's progress in meeting the first goal of the SOA. Its purpose is to demonstrate that while multiple factors drive increases to the statewide foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid, the reforms of the SOA in particular have contributed to significant growth above and beyond historic trends.

[9] MTF's analysis of foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid growth under the "No-SOA" scenario relies on funding projections conducted by the department to determine the 'minimum aid adjustment' within the foundation budget formula. The minimum aid adjustment is calculated for a given fiscal year using actual Chapter 70 base aid amounts from the prior fiscal year. Therefore, in FY 2023 and FY 2024, the calculation of the minimum aid adjustment reflects the implementation of the SOA from the prior fiscal year. Additionally, the minimum aid adjustment projections do not capture the impacts of updating the low-income threshold from 133% FPL to 185% FPL. For these reasons, MTF's analysis between "No-SOA" and "Post-SOA" likely underestimates the fiscal impacts of the SOA reforms on foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid growth.

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Chapter 70 State Aid

As the statewide foundation budget has grown over the first three years of SOA implementation, so too has the state's contribution towards its cost, known as 'Chapter 70 state aid.' Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, Chapter 70 aid increased from $5.3 billion to $6.6 billion; a jump of $1.3 billion (25 percent). In the decade prior to the SOA, Chapter 70 aid increased from $3.8 billion to $5.3 billion; a $1.4 billion, or 37 percent, increase.

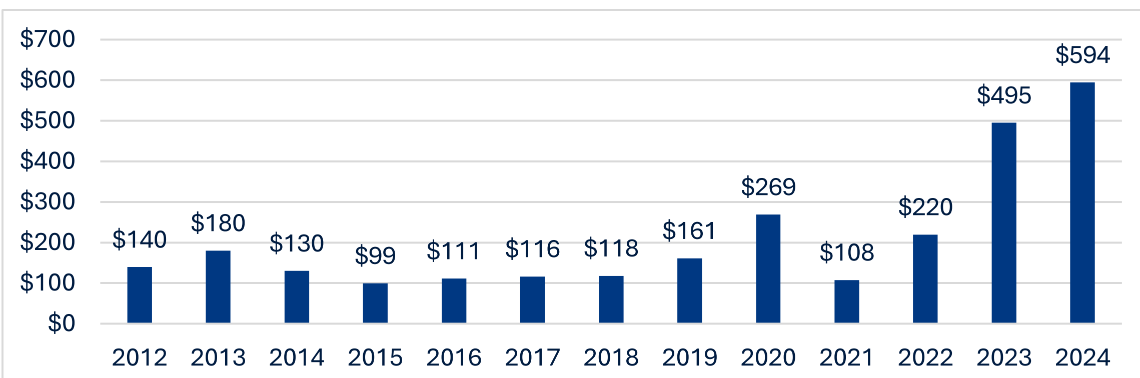
Figure 7. Statewide Chapter 70 Aid Growth

10-Years Before SOA		SOA Implementation, Years 1 - 3	
Fiscal Year	**Chapter 70 Aid**	**Fiscal Year**	**Chapter 70 Aid**
FY 2011	$3,851	FY 2021	$5,283
FY 2021	$5,283	FY 2024	$6,592
$ Growth	**$1,432**	**$ Growth**	**$1,309**
% Growth	**37%**	**% Growth**	**25%**

$ in millions

During SOA implementation to date, year-over-year increases in Chapter 70 state aid have been substantial. In the ten years prior to the SOA, the average annual increase in Chapter 70 aid was $143.2 million. Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, Chapter 70 aid increased by an average of $436.3 million each year. In FY 2023 and FY 2024, Chapter 70 increased by nearly $500 million and $600 million, respectively.

Figure 8. Annual Increases in Chapter 70 State Aid



$ in millions

Like the statewide foundation budget, trends in Chapter 70 state aid are influenced by factors unrelated to SOA implementation. The comparison below between "No-SOA" and "Post-SOA" demonstrates that without the reforms of the new law, Chapter 70 state aid would have increased by $766 million between FY 2021 and FY 2024. During that timeframe, actual Chapter 70 state aid increased by $1.3 billion. Therefore, by FY 2024 the SOA had independently resulted in an additional $543 million in state aid growth.

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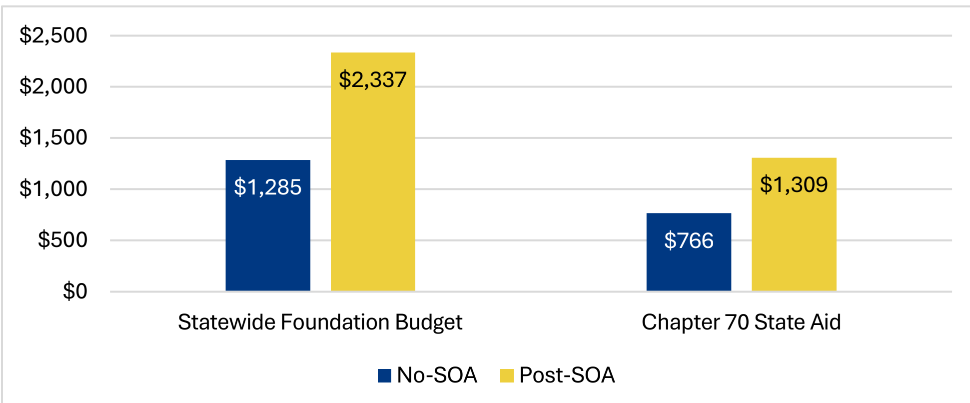
Figure 9. MTF Comparison of Projected v. Actual Statewide Chapter 70 Aid Growth

No-SOA (Projected)		Post-SOA (Actual)	
Fiscal Year	**Chapter 70 Aid**	**Fiscal Year**	**Chapter 70 Aid**
FY 2021	$5,284	FY 2021	$5,284
FY 2024	$6,050	FY 2024	$6,593
$ Growth	**$766**	**$ Growth**	**$1,309**
% Growth	**14%**	**% Growth**	**25%**
SOA-driven Chapter 70 State Aid Growth: $543 million			

$ in millions

Evaluating school finance trends at the statewide level contextualizes the magnitude of the new investment that is being driven by the SOA. As the chart below demonstrates, the reforms of the SOA alone resulted in a $1 billion increase to the statewide foundation budget and a $543 million increase to Chapter 70 aid by FY 2024.

Figure 10. Comparison of Foundation Budget & Chapter 70 Aid Growth, FY 2021 – FY 2024



$ in millions

However, the first goal of the Student Opportunity Act was not merely to increase overall funding for public education in Massachusetts; it was to specifically target the largest increases in funding towards the highest-need districts in the state. To assess the state's success in achieving that objective, it is necessary to look at foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid trends at the district level.

District-Level Funding Trends

To conduct an analysis of the districts that have experienced the largest increases in state aid over the first three years of SOA implementation, MTF first organizes districts into ten equal-sized groups, based on their share of low-income students. Each decile group includes 32 school districts, and these uniform cohorts serve as a useful tool for identifying the highest-need districts across the state

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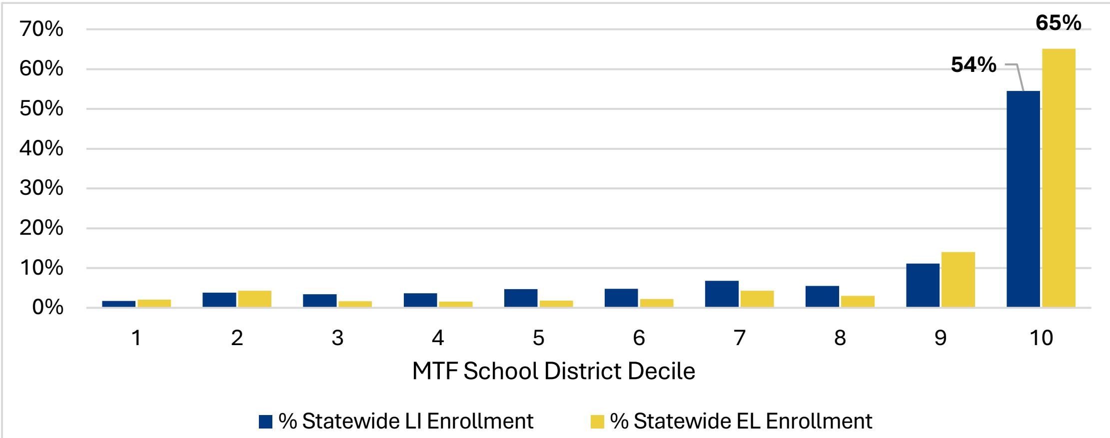
because there is a strong correlation between the share of low-income students in a district and the number of English learners also identified.[10]

Figure 11. MTF School District Groupings



For example, the districts included in Decile 10 are educating over 50 percent of students identified as low-income and over 60 percent of identified English Learner students across the state.[11]

Throughout the rest of this section, the increases in the foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid over the first three years of SOA implementation will be presented by decile to assess whether or not the greatest increases in new education funding are being targeted to the highest-need districts.

Foundation Budget

As demonstrated above, over the first three years of SOA implementation (FY 2021 – FY 2024), growth in the statewide foundation budget solely attributable to the reforms of the new law was over $1 billion. When that increase is broken down by decile, nearly 70 percent ($725 million) was directed towards the highest-need districts in Deciles 9 and 10. Foundation budget increases for the districts in Decile 10 alone accounted for 58.8 percent of the total statewide increase.

[10] In the foundation budget formula, districts are organized into 12 low-income groups based on their share of identified low-income students. Group 1 includes districts where approximately five percent of students are identified as low-income; and Group 12 includes districts where greater than 80 percent of the student body is identified as low-income. This report does not rely on those group assignments for its analysis due to the uneven distribution of districts across low-income groups. For example, in FY 2024, there were seven districts in Group 12, compared to 45 districts in Group 10, and two districts in Group 1.

[11] MTF Decile 10 includes the City of Boston, where 75.9 percent of students were identified as Low-Income and 27.2 percent were identified as English Language learners in FY 2024. The City's unique status as the largest school district in the state, with relatively higher per-pupil spending levels, does affect the Decile 10 averages for both foundation budget growth and actual spending increases in the analysis that follows.

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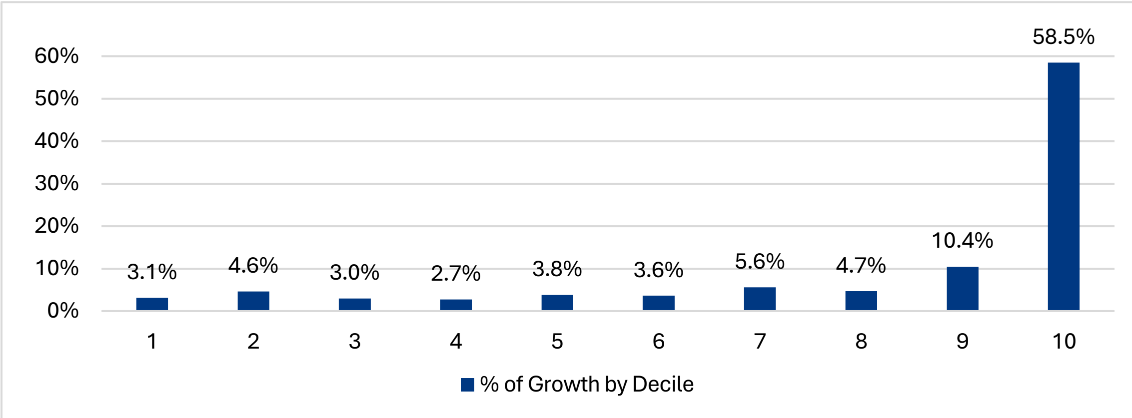
Figure 12. SOA-only Foundation Budget Increase, % by Decile, FY 2021 – FY 2024

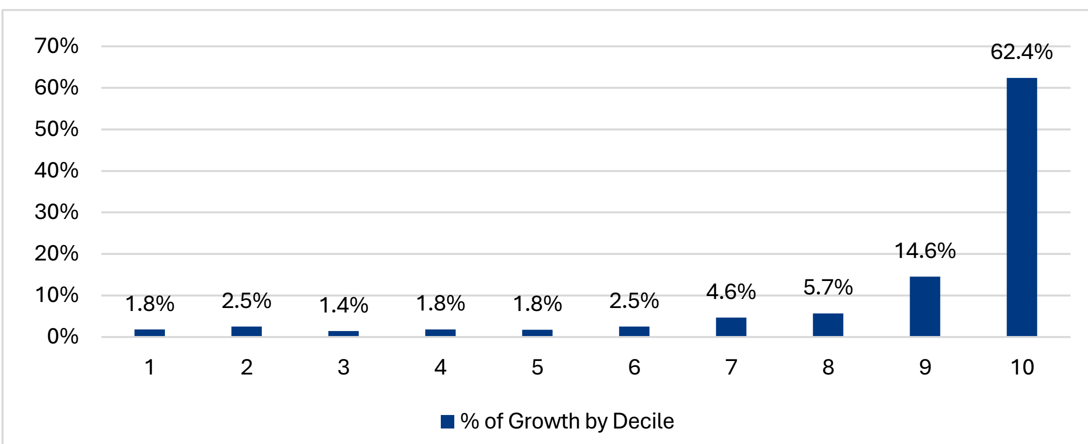


For the 225 districts in Deciles 1 through 8, increases to their foundation budgets driven by the reforms of the SOA account for only $327 million (approximately 30 percent) of the total $1 billion increase.

Chapter 70 State Aid

In assessing the distribution of Chapter 70 state aid increases between FY 2021 and FY 2024, only related to SOA reforms, the same trend emerges. Over the first three years of implementation, 77 percent of the Chapter 70 state aid increase related to the SOA ($418 million) went towards the 64 districts in Deciles 9 and 10, and 22 percent of the increase ($121 million) went towards the districts in Deciles 1 through 8.

Figure 13. SOA-only Chapter 70 State Aid Increase, % by Decile, FY 2021 – FY 2024



Based on this analysis, it is clear that during the first three years of SOA implementation, the districts across the state serving the highest numbers of high-need students have seen their foundation budgets and state aid amounts increase substantially, with the funding increases in Decile 10 accounting for 62.4 percent of total statewide growth.

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As the assessment of statewide funding trends demonstrates, absent the passage of the SOA, foundation budgets and Chapter 70 state aid amounts would have still increased by a considerable margin between FY 2021 and FY 2024 due to other factors, including inflation. However, the comparisons between the "No-SOA" and "Post-SOA" funding trends show that the reforms of the SOA specifically have contributed to hundreds of millions of dollars in increases in education funding for the highest need districts across the state serving the greatest shares of low-income students and English learners.

Per-Pupil Funding Trends

To demonstrate what the increase in education funding between FY 2021 and FY 2024 has meant for school districts at the student level, in the table below average foundation budget per-pupil amounts are presented by decile grouping.

Over the first three years of SOA implementation, the average foundation budget per-pupil amount for each decile increased by more than 15 percent; with the average per-pupil amount for districts in Decile 10 growing by nearly 30 percent, an increase of $4,000 more per student.

Figure 14. Average Foundation Budget Per-Pupil Amounts by Decile, FY 2021 – FY 2024

Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FY 2021	$10,599	$10,760	$11,440	$11,718	$11,193	$12,499	$12,605	$13,096	$12,992	$13,502
FY 2024	$12,299	$12,579	$13,483	$13,910	$13,486	$15,019	$15,568	$16,266	$16,778	$17,511
$ Increase	**$1,700**	**$1,819**	**$2,042**	**$2,191**	**$2,293**	**$2,519**	**$2,963**	**$3,170**	**$3,786**	**$4,010**
% Increase	**16%**	**17%**	**18%**	**19%**	**20%**	**20%**	**24%**	**24%**	**29%**	**30%**

However, while these average foundation budget per-pupil amounts demonstrate how funding levels as calculated by the foundation budget formula increased between FY 2021 and FY 2024; they do not reflect the additional funding that local school districts elect to contribute towards educating their students.

In Massachusetts, municipalities have the ability to increase local spending on K-12 public education above and beyond what is required by the foundation budget formula. Accounting for this additional funding is critical, because it illustrates that while within the confines of the foundation budget formula the greatest increases to per-pupil spending have been concentrated amongst the highest-need districts; when additional "above-foundation" spending is also considered, per-pupil spending levels across higher-wealth and lower-need districts have increased significantly as well.

Figure 15. Average Actual Per-Pupil Funding Amounts by Decile, FY 2021 – FY 2024

Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FY 2021	$17,950	$16,152	$17,019	$16,622	$17,237	$17,453	$17,773	$18,999	$19,475	$14,703
FY 2024	$21,245	$18,937	$19,175	$19,262	$20,363	$20,785	$20,752	$21,940	$24,459	$18,573
$ Increase	**$3,295**	**$2,785**	**$2,156**	**$2,640**	**$3,126**	**$3,332**	**$2,979**	**$2,941**	**$4,984**	**$3,870**
% Increase	**18%**	**17%**	**13%**	**16%**	**18%**	**19%**	**17%**	**15%**	**26%**	**26%**

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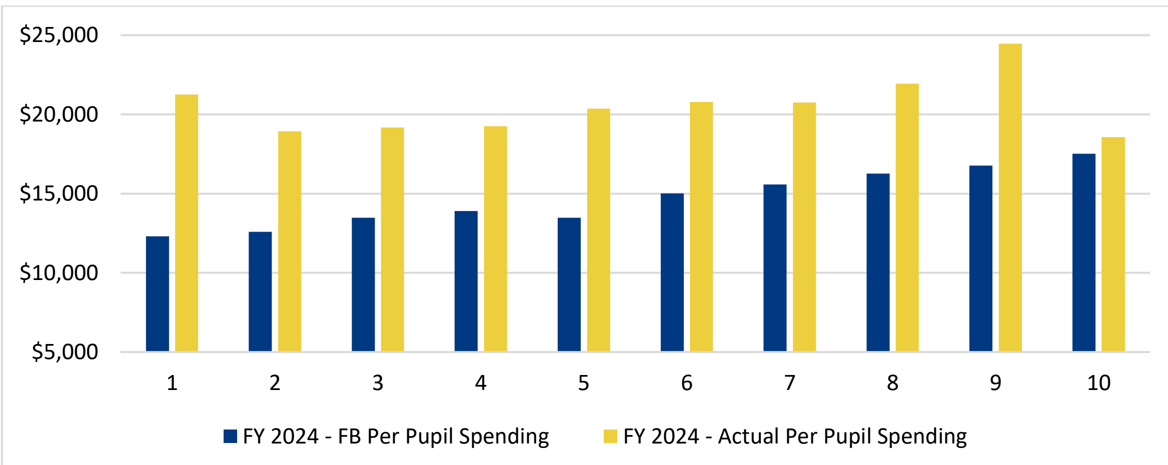
For districts in Decile 10, the average actual per-pupil funding amount increased by 26 percent between FY 2021 and FY 2024; a nominal increase of just under $4,000 and essentially equal to the increase required by the foundation budget formula. For districts in Decile 1, the average actual per-pupil funding amount increased by $3,200; nearly double what was required under the formula and driven by additional local spending on education. Furthermore, the gap between per-pupil spending levels for districts in Decile 1 and Decile 10 was $3,247 in FY 2021, decreasing by less than $600 – to $2,672 – by FY 2024.

The result of this dynamic - districts continuing to contribute additional local dollars, at the same time that the SOA is driving large required increases in spending towards the highest-need districts – is that there remains a persistent gap in per-pupil spending levels between districts on either end of the high-needs spectrum.

Figure 16. FY 2024 Average Foundation Budget Per-Pupil v. Average Actual Spending Per-Pupil by Decile



Summing Up the State's Progress on Meeting SOA Goal #1:

- The reforms of the SOA have successfully increased the state's investment in public schools by billions of dollars between implementation years 1 – 3.
- Despite the impacts of inflation and enrollment, which also impact overall state funding and school spending levels, the specific reforms of the SOA have increased investments in public education by over $1 billion.
- New state investments have been most heavily directed towards the highest need districts across the state, successfully increasing per-pupil funding levels by 30 percent over the first three years of SOA implementation.
- However, districts' abilities to spend additional money locally on their public schools continues to cause disparities between high-wealth and high-need communities.
- This dynamic will always exist, certain districts will always be able to provide greater levels of funding for their schools – but the goal should be to decrease the gap between districts to the greatest extent possible.

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SOA Goal #2: Establish a data-driven reporting structure that connects increased investments to specific evidence-based practices.

To measure the state's success in meeting the second objective of the SOA – establish a data-driven reporting structure that connects increased investments to specific evidence-based practices and improved student outcomes – MTF analyzed financial reports that school districts are required to submit to the department, including the SOA District Plans and amendments required under the law, as well as annual school district expenditure reports. This analysis allowed MTF to both identify how districts intended to use the new resources available to them under the SOA and compare those intentions to actual school spending trends.

In this section of the report, MTF's analysis focuses on a subset of ten districts in Decile 10 that collectively received nearly 50 percent of the increased Chapter 70 aid directly tied to the reforms of the SOA between FY 2021 and FY 2024. As described above, districts in Decile 10 are educating the largest proportions of high-needs students, including 54 percent of identified low-income students across the state and 65 percent of English learners. While this does not constitute an exhaustive review of every district's spending plans and actual expenditures, it offers a useful summary of the districts experiencing the largest financial benefits from the reforms of the SOA.

For each of the ten priority districts, MTF conducted a multi-step analysis:

- Determine the amount of new Chapter 70 state aid received over the first three years of SOA implementation directly tied to the reforms of the new law;
- Track the evidence-based practices identified in SOA plans and amendments, including the amount of funding intended to be dedicated to each initiative; and
- Assess actual district expenditure trends to determine where new resources have been allocated and if increased spending aligns with the implementation of evidence-based practices.

The analysis in this section is presented in the aggregate. A complete list of school districts, with their assigned MTF decile and an identifier for priority districts is included in Appendix B.

State Education Aid Increases – 10 Priority Districts

Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, total statewide Chapter 70 aid increased by $1.3 billion, and the amount of that increase directly tied to the reforms of the SOA was $543 million.

Across the ten priority districts whose SOA District Plans and district expenditure reports are reviewed in the following sections, total Chapter 70 aid increased collectively by $597 million between FY 2021 and FY 2024; and the amount of that increase directly tied to the reforms of the SOA is estimated to be $247 million – approximately 50 percent of the total increase in state education aid explicitly related to the new law.

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Figure 17. Chapter 70 Aid Increases Statewide v. Priority Districts

	Statewide Chapter 70	Priority Districts Chapter 70	% of Statewide Increases
FY 2021	$5,284	$1,866	--
FY 2024	$6,593	$2,463	--
$ Increase	**$1,309**	**$597**	**46%**
Tied to SOA	**$543**	**$247**	**46%**

$ in millions

In the analysis to follow, this increase in Chapter 70 aid tied to the reforms of the SOA will be compared to the amount of spending on evidence-based practices identified through districts' SOA plan submissions.

SOA Plan Analysis – 10 Priority Districts

Background on SOA District Plans

As described above, to ensure that progress was being made towards meeting statewide and district student achievement targets, the SOA required districts to develop three-year plans to meet their student outcome goals. These plans, known as "SOA District Plans," were to be created by district superintendents in consultation with school committees, parents, and community members; and statutory language required the plans to include four specific elements:

1. A description of how the district will use its Chapter 70 state aid in support of the plan, including an explanation of how the funding will support the needs of English learners and low-income students;
2. A description of the evidence-based programs, supports, and interventions that the school district will implement to address gaps in student achievement across different subgroups;
3. A description of the outcome metrics that the district will rely upon to measure success in closing gaps in achievement among student subgroups; and
4. A description of how the district will increase parent engagement, particularly among parents of low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

Under the original language of the SOA, the department was directed to develop statewide student achievement targets upon the passage of the new law and districts' inaugural three-year SOA District Plans were due by April 1, 2020. This submission deadline was aligned with the first year of SOA funding increases, which were set to begin in FY 2021 (school year 2020 – 2021).

On March 10, 2020, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and on March 15, 2020 an order was issued to temporarily close all public and private elementary and secondary schools in Massachusetts. Subsequently, the first year of SOA implementation was delayed until FY 2022 (school year 2021 – 2022) and the deadline for districts to submit their first SOA District Plans was moved to January 15, 2021.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the entire education ecosystem in Massachusetts – including an influx of more than $2 billion in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) aid and interruptions to regular student testing and assessments

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– DESE delayed the development of statewide student achievement targets and amended its guidance to districts for the SOA plan amendments required for FY 2022 and FY 2023. In April 2024, districts were required to submit new three-year SOA District Plans for the final years of implementation (FY 2025 – FY 2027).

Figure 18 denotes major events related to the implementation of the SOA, including due dates for SOA Plan submissions and delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 18. Timeline of SOA Implementation, District Plan Submissions, and COVID-related Delays

Nov. 26, 2019	COVID-19 state of emergency declared	**Mar. 15, 2020**	Original SOA District Plan Due Date	**Dec. 11, 2021**	New SOA District Plan Submission Date	**April 2022**	FY 2023 SOA Amendments Due	**April 2024**	Statewide Student Achievement Targets Set
SOA signed into law.	**Mar. 10, 2020**	All public and private schools closed	**Apr. 1, 2020**	Delayed FY 2021 budget signed into law.	**Jan.15, 2021**	FY 2022 SOA Amendments Due	**April 2023**	New SOA 3-Year Plans Due	**2024**

This report is focused on the funding received by districts during the first three years of SOA implementation (FY 2022 – FY 2024) and if that funding was used in support of specific evidence-based practices. As such, the analysis below is conducted on the SOA plan amendments that districts were required to submit in FY 2022 and FY 2023. Because districts were required to submit new three-year SOA District Plans in FY 2024, comparable data does not exist for the third year of SOA funding increases.

A Note on Student Achievement Targets

Due to the impacts of the pandemic on student learning and the administration of standard assessments, DESE delayed the establishment of student achievement targets until 2024. To track the state's progress in closing student achievement gaps, the department has chosen to measure MCAS English Language Arts and Mathematics achievement over time for the "lowest performing students group."

In June 2025, DESE published its initial analysis of the state's progress in closing student achievement gaps and meeting targets in its legislatively required report: *Report to the Legislature: Student Opportunity Act Three-Year Evidence-Based Plan (2023-2024).*

This report does not assess improved student performance as a result of increased SOA-driven investments. In future research work, MTF will build on its initial analysis of funding trends and identified district investments by looking further at districts' progress towards student achievement targets over time.

FY 2022 & FY 2023 SOA Plan Amendments

In the fall of 2021, DESE issued updated guidance to districts regarding the development and submission of their FY 2022 SOA plan amendments. Because of the unique impacts of the pandemic – including the extraordinary infusion of federal ESSER dollars into schools – districts were asked to conduct thorough reassessments of their original SOA district plans. This included directives for

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districts to re-engage with stakeholders, reexamine their identified evidence-based practices, and report how they were using a wider variety of funding sources to implement their SOA plans.[12]

The original language of the law directed districts to include in their SOA plans a description of the evidence-based programs that would be implemented to address persistent gaps in student achievement. The law further described ten potential programs that districts could adopt, and permitted DESE to identify additional programs determined to be evidence-based. In initial SOA Plan guidance, the department identified a list of 17 programs that aligned with the requirements of the law; and for the FY 2022 SOA plan amendments, that list was expanded to include 21 recommended programs. Evidence-based programs were organized into four categories: 1) enhanced core instruction, 2) targeted student supports, 3) talent development, and 4) conditions for student success.

Figure 19. Evidence-Based Programs Identified by DESE for FY 2022 & FY 2023

#	Evidence-Based Program
Enhanced Core Instruction	
1	Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers.
2	Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grants.
3	Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education.
4	Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum.
5	Expanded access to career-technical education, including "After Dark" district-vocational partnerships.
6	Culturally responsive teaching and other strategies that create equitable and culturally responsive learning environments for students.
7	Expanded learning time for all students in the form of a longer school day or school year.
Targeted Student Supports	
8	Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners.
9	English Learner education programs, including dual language and transitional bilingual education.
10	Acceleration academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners.
11	Dropout prevention and recovery programs.
Talent Development	
12	Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention.
13	Leadership pipeline development programs for schools.
14	Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions.
15	Increasing opportunities for educators and support staff to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, utilizing districts and school teaming structures.

[12] Report to the Legislature: Student Opportunity Act Three-Year Evidence-Based Plans (2020-2021).

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Conditions for Student Success	
16	Expanding capacity to address social-emotional learning and mental health needs of students and families.
17	Increasing opportunities for all students to engage in arts, enrichment, world languages, athletics, and elective course.
18	Developing effective family/school partnerships.
19	Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wrap-around services.
20	Labor management partnerships to improve student performance.
21	Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments.

Across the ten priority districts, an average of four evidence-based programs were identified in SOA plan amendments submitted for FY 2022 and FY 2023; and collectively, priority districts indicated their intention to dedicate $145.5 million of Chapter 70 state aid towards their chosen programs.

Over the first three years of SOA implementation, it is possible to use these district plans to connect 59 percent of the Chapter 70 aid increases received by the priority districts directly tied to SOA reforms as being used for the 21 evidence-based practices identified above.

Figure 20. Planned Spending on EBPs v. SOA-related Chapter 70 Aid Increases

	Priority Districts
FY 22 – FY 24 Total Chapter 70 Aid Increase	$597
FY 22 - FY 24 Chapter 70 Aid Increase tied to SOA	**$247**
Reported Chapter 70 Funding for EBPs	**$146**
Average EBPs Identified per District	4
EBP Funding as a % of Chapter 70 Aid Increase	**59%**

$ in millions

Compared to the total increase in Chapter 70 aid these districts received between FY 2021 and FY 2024 ($597 million), that percentage drops to 25 percent as being intended for specific evidence-based practices.

Across districts' plan amendments, the five most common evidence-based practices chosen by districts are listed in the table below. The greatest amount of spending was targeted towards supporting educators in implementing high-quality aligned curriculum and expanding access to full-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds.

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Figure 21. Most Common Evidence-Based Practices Identified by Priority Districts

#	Evidence-Based Practice	FY 2022 & FY 2023 Identified Spending	% of Total EBP Planned Spending
4	Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum.	$34,086,772	23.3%
1	Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers	$27,548,896	18.8%
8	Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners.	$21,709,937	14.8%
15	Increasing opportunities for educators and support staff to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, utilizing districts and school teaming structures.	$18,228,882	12.4%
17	Increasing opportunities for all students to engage in arts, enrichment, world languages, athletics, and elective course.	$14,463,056	9.9%

Main Takeaways: SOA Plan Analysis

The first three years of SOA implementation were marked, most significantly, by the onset and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between FY 2022 and FY 2024, total state aid for public schools increased by more than $1 billion, at the same time that the federal government was sending more than $2 billion directly to districts. Additionally, while the SOA called for the development and implementation of a robust data-driven district reporting structure, the pandemic forced the department to delay certain reporting deadlines, adjust initial guidance, and focus its attention on keeping schools and students safe.

This reality – that districts were receiving historic levels of state and federal funding at the same time that tracking how those resources were being used was becoming increasingly difficult – results in several challenges related to connecting increased state aid for public schools made possible by the SOA to investments in specific evidence-based practices that would ultimately lead to improved student outcomes.

- *Challenge #1:* Between FY 2020 and FY 2021, Massachusetts received $2.9 billion in federal ESSER funding, and between FY 2021 and FY 2024 statewide Chapter 70 aid increased by $1.3 billion; and the vast majority of federal aid was directed towards the same subset of districts that were receiving the largest financial benefits from the SOA. This massive influx of funding posed a financial management challenge for schools, with many districts prioritizing the use of one-time federal funds to avoid reversions or claw backs. While DESE helpfully updated its SOA plan amendment guidance and required districts to report how they planned to use federal ESSER funding, Chapter 70 aid, and other grants to support specific evidence-based practices, the availability of several new large sources of funding

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made it challenging for districts to prioritize the use of new Chapter 70 state aid and to track the total amount of funding directed towards evidence-based practices.

- *Challenge #2:* School districts were required to submit their SOA plan amendments for FY 2022 and FY 2023 by April 1st of 2022 and 2023, respectively. While districts' amendments provided helpful information about how they *intended* to use various financial resources to support evidence-based practices, because the amendments were submitted before the end of the fiscal year, they do not reflect actual district expenditures. Additionally, the information included in the SOA plan amendments is not easily comparable to other financial reports that districts are required to complete at the end of the fiscal year, which creates challenges in connecting districts' intended investments to actual spending patterns.
- *Challenge #3:* In 2024, districts were required to submit updated three-year SOA District Plans for FY 2025 – FY 2027, and as a result, SOA Plan amendments were not submitted for FY 2024 spending. Without consistent, comparable spending reports for the first three years of SOA implementation, it is not possible to present a complete analysis of how districts intended to use their new resources to close student achievement and opportunity gaps.

Despite these obstacles, there are still notable takeaways from an analysis of the SOA plan amendments submitted by the ten priority districts for FY 2022 and FY 2023.

- Districts indicated their intention to spend approximately **60 percent of the increased Chapter 70 aid received between FY 2021 and FY 2024 explicitly tied to the reforms of the SOA on specific evidence-based practices**. If comparable data from FY 2024 was available, this percentage would likely increase.
- Districts generally focused on implementing a smaller number of evidence-based practices, as opposed to many new programs at once; **districts identified an average of four evidence-based practices each year**.
- Evidence-based practices within the **'Enhanced Core Instruction' category received a large share of increased investments**, including implementing high-quality aligned curriculum and expanding access to full-day pre-kindergarten.

In the following section, MTF expands on its analysis of SOA Plan amendments and analyzes actual district expenditures. While district expenditure data is not available at the program-level, meaning that it cannot identify investments in specific evidence-based practices, it does illustrate categorical spending trends. Certain spending increases, like those for teachers/additional staff or instructional materials, would be consistent with the implementation of evidence-based practices; while others, including those for employee benefits or out-of-district tuition payments, may reflect district cost pressures unrelated to addressing student achievement and opportunity gaps.

As the analysis will demonstrate, while both the SOA Plan amendments and district expenditure reports provide useful information regarding districts' intentions and actual spending patterns; the inability to directly compare the financial data submitted by districts across the two reports undermines their usefulness in connecting SOA-related state spending increases to specific initiatives that will improve student outcomes and achievement.

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District Expenditure Analysis – 10 Priority Districts

Background on District Expenditure Reports

In Massachusetts, every municipality and regional school district is required to submit an End-of-Year Financial Report (EOYR) to the DESE by September 30th of each year. These annual reports include detailed information about a district's actual expenditures and revenues from the prior fiscal year, as well as estimated spending and revenues for the current fiscal year.

The financial data collected through the EOYR is used by DESE for a variety of reporting and auditing purposes, including the determination of district compliance with net school spending requirements and the compilation of district expenditure reports.

District expenditure reports break down in-district spending across ten functional categories, and also include data on out-of-district spending related to tuition payments and transportation. Compared to Net School Spending requirements, district expenditure data provides a more holistic look at school spending patterns, due to its inclusion of transportation and capital-related expenses.

The table below lists the twelve categories for in-district and out-of-district expenditures. Detailed descriptions of these categories and the costs they capture are included in Appendix C.

Figure 22. Functional Spending Categories for In-District Expenditures

Functional Category	Functional Category
Administration – ADMN	Instructional Materials – MATL
Instructional Leadership – LDRS	Guidance & Counseling – GUID
Teachers – TCHR	Pupil Services – SERV
Other Teaching Services – TSER	Operations & Maintenance – OPMN
Professional Development – PDEV	Insurance & Retirement Programs – BENE
Out-of-District Tuition - TUIT	Out-of-District Transportation - ODTR

District expenditure data is further broken down by funding source, including spending supported by General Fund resources (school committee and municipal appropriations) and Grants/Revolving Funds (federal grants, state grants, private grants and gifts, circuit breaker funds, school choice and other tuition revolving funds, and other local receipts).

In this section, district expenditures supported by General Fund resources between FY 2021 and FY 2024 are assessed across the ten priority districts. By focusing on expenditures supported by the General Fund, this analysis does not reflect district spending supported by federal ESSER funding. While federal resources contributed to significant increases in spending during this time period, the goal of this report is to look specifically at district spending patterns supported by state and local resources during the first three years of SOA implementation.

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FY 2022 – FY 2024 District Expenditure Trends

In FY 2021, total in-district and out-of-district spending across the ten priority districts was $2.5 billion. By FY 2024, total spending had grown to $3.2 billion, an increase of $752.4 million (30 percent). Approximately 80 percent of that total increase ($597 million), can be attributed to Chapter 70 state aid growth during the same time period.

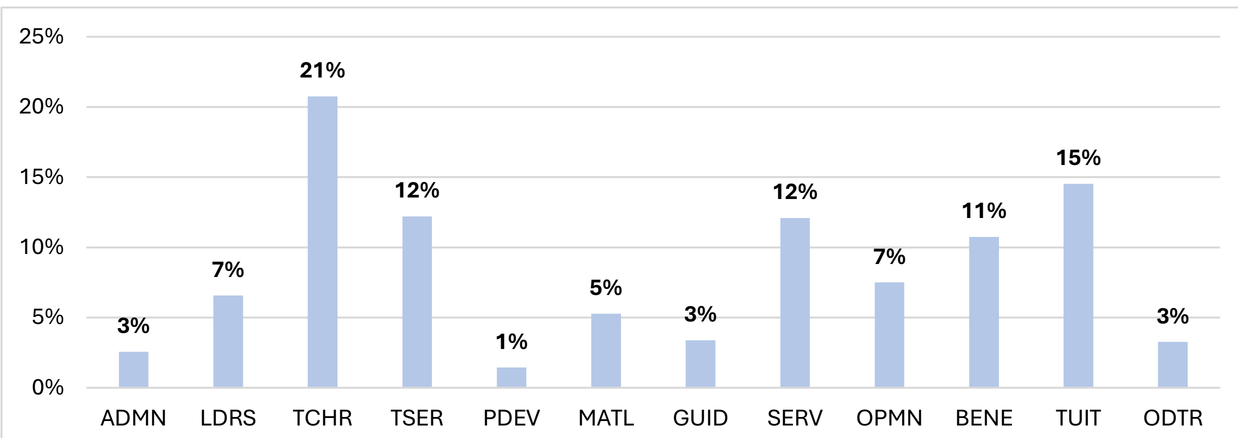
Figure 23. Ten Priority Districts: District Expenditure & Chapter 70 Aid Increases, FY 2021 – FY 2024

Fiscal Year	In-District & Out-of-District Expenditures	Chapter 70 Aid
FY 2021	$2,488	$1,866
FY 2024	$3,240	$2,463
$ Increase	**$752**	**$597**
Ch. 70 as a % of Expenditure Increase	**79%**	

$ in millions

When the $752 million increase in district expenditures between FY 2021 and FY 2024 is broken down by functional category, the largest drivers of the increase are teacher salaries, out-of-district tuition payments, pupil services, and other teaching services.

Figure 24. Ten Priority Districts: District Expenditure Increases by Category as a % of Total Increase, FY 2021 – FY 2024



- ***Teachers (TCHR)*** –The 'Teachers' category includes costs entirely related to teacher salaries; which reflects both increases to teacher salaries, as well as the hiring of new teachers. Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, spending growth in this category accounts for 21 percent of the overall increase in district expenditures for the ten priority districts. Nominally, spending in this category increased from $865 million to $1 billion; an increase of $156 million. During the same time period, the number of teachers employed by the ten priority districts increased from 11,175 to 11,926; an increase of 751 teachers or seven percent. This would suggest that a larger amount of new spending in this category was in support of salary increases rather than the hiring of new teachers.
- ***Out-of-District Tuition Payments (TUIT)*** – The 'Out-of-District Tuition Payments' category includes tuition payments for school choice, charter schools, educational collaboratives,

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and out-of-district special education schools. Increasing costs for tuition payments to out-of-district schools drives 15 percent of the total increase in district expenditures across the ten priority districts. Nominally, this category increased from $359 million to $469 million.

- ***Pupil Services (SERV)*** – 'Pupil Services' includes costs related to medical/health services for students, athletics, food services, and transportation. Expenses in this category account for 12 percent of the overall increase in district expenditures between FY 2021 and FY 2024, and this increase is largely due to student transportation costs. Spending in this category grew from $119 million to $210 million.

- ***Other Teaching Services (TSER)*** – The 'Other Teaching Services' category includes spending related to substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, librarians, distance learning, and online coursework. Spending growth in this category comprise 12 percent of the overall increase in district expenditures for the ten priority districts between FY 2021 and FY 2024. Nominally, spending in this category increased from $142 million to $234 million.

Spending increases related to 'Teachers' and 'Other Teaching Services' may be consistent with the implementation of evidence-based practices, particularly those related to enhanced core instruction or targeted student supports. However, increased spending on 'Out-of-District Tuition Payments' or 'Pupil Services' is likely indicative of other district cost pressures.

As aforementioned, spending data in the district expenditure reports is not available at the program level and cannot be used to identify specific investments in evidence-based programs. Without the ability to compare the financial data submitted by districts across their SOA Plan amendments and district expenditure reports, any analysis of actual district spending trends supported by the reforms of the SOA is limited.

Summing Up the State's Progress in Meeting SOA Goal #2

- The SOA outlined a multi-pronged approach to create a data-driven reporting structure that would allow school leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders to clearly connect increased investments stemming from the SOA to investments in evidence-based practices that sought to close student achievement and opportunity gaps.
- The implementation of that reporting structure was significantly impacted by the onset and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; with districts and the department focused primarily on keeping schools and students safe.
- SOA Plan amendments submitted by districts in FY 2022 and FY 2023 provide detailed information about the resources intended to support specific evidence-based practices, including descriptions of the metrics that districts identified to track improved student performance over time.
- However, data collected through SOA Plan amendments is inconsistent and not easily comparable to other district financial reports; preventing a direct connection between districts' intended use of funds and actual district expenditure trends.
- District expenditure reports provide additional insight into district spending patterns during the first three years of SOA implementation, but that spending data is not available at the program-level.
- Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, district expenditures across the ten priority districts increased by $752 million; and that increase was predominantly driven by teacher salaries, out-of-district tuition payments, and pupil services.
- Spending increases in those categories may be consistent with the implementation of evidence-based practices; however, it is not possible to definitively connect increased district spending made possible by the SOA to direct investments in programs designed to close student opportunity and achievement gaps.

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Lessons Learned & Looking Ahead

Assessing the State's Progress on SOA Implementation, Years 1 – 3

Through this report, MTF aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the state's progress in achieving the primary goals of the Student Opportunity Act during the first three years of the law's implementation (FY 2022 – FY 2024).

The objectives of the SOA were clear: (1) substantially increase state aid for high-needs districts across the state that are educating the largest shares of low-income and English learner students; (2) create a data-driven reporting structure that would allow policymakers and the public to identify how these resources are being used, connect increased state aid to specific initiatives to improve student opportunity and achievement gaps, and ultimately inform future policy action.

To determine the state's success in meeting these goals, a multi-step analysis was conducted:

1. First, MTF analyzed increases to the foundation budget and Chapter 70 state aid at the statewide and district level between FY 2021 and FY 2024. To isolate the direct impacts of SOA reforms on state aid growth, a comparison was conducted between projected "No-SOA" and actual "Post-SOA" trends. Then, to identify if the largest increases in state aid tied to the reforms of the SOA were going towards the highest-need districts, districts were organized into ten equal-sized groups based on their share of low-income students. Ultimately, this analysis found that **77 percent of the Chapter 70 state aid increase related to the SOA went towards the 64 districts educating the largest numbers of low-income and English learner students**.

2. Second, MTF conducted a review of the SOA plan amendments submitted by the ten priority districts that collectively received nearly 50 percent of the Chapter 70 aid increases related to the SOA between FY 2021 and FY 2024. This assessment determined that while SOA plan amendments included detailed descriptions regarding how districts *intended* to use increased state aid to support specific evidence-based practices, **incomplete and inconsistent data, as well as the inability to cross-reference SOA plan amendments with other district financial reports, prevents policymakers and the public from clearly connecting increased investments to specific evidence-based programs that could lead to improved student outcomes**.

3. Lastly, to build on the review of SOA plan amendments, MTF analyzed district expenditure reports for the ten priority districts to identify actual district spending trends between FY 2021 and FY 2024. Spending data included in the district expenditure reports is organized by category, but not available at the program-level. **During the first three years of SOA implementation, actual spending increases across the ten priority districts were predominantly driven by new expenditures on teacher salaries, out-of-district tuition payments, pupil services, and other teaching services**. While certain categorial spending increases may be consistent with the implementation of evidence-based practices, without greater detail or the ability to directly compare SOA plan amendments with district expenditure reports, it is not possible to connect these increases to SOA-related initiatives.

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In accomplishing the first goal of the SOA, the state has clearly achieved success. The vast majority of increased state investment in K-12 public schools has been targeted towards the highest-need districts across the state.

Meeting the second goal of the new law has proven more challenging. The SOA outlined the data and reporting requirements that would be necessary to meaningfully track the impact of new state spending on public schools, and the department provided clear guidance to districts on the completion and submission of SOA District Plans and amendments. However, the pandemic created new safety, learning, and financial management requirements at the state and local level; and in many ways these necessary requirements hindered the implementation of a robust district reporting structure. Additionally, timing constraints and the lack of alignment between SOA-related reports and other district financial data prevents a clear connection from being made between SOA-driven investments, spending on evidence-based practices, and eventually, improved student outcomes.

FY 2025 – FY 2027 SOA District Plans

In April 2024, school districts were required to submit the second round of three-year SOA District Plans. In recognition of where the SOA reporting structure fell short between FY 2022 and FY 2024, notable changes were made to the district reporting requirements.

The new SOA District Plans cover the final three years of SOA implementation (FY 2025 to FY 2027), and the department provided districts with updated guidance that incorporated several lessons learned from the first cycle of three-year plans.

The department provided districts with new tools to develop their SOA District Plans – like a publicly available database to compare student outcomes – and they established performance targets for districts to incorporate into their improvement strategies. Most importantly, the department adjusted the financial reporting components of the SOA District Plans to align with district expenditure reports and foundation budget spending categories.

Additionally, districts receiving significant increases in Chapter 70 state aid were required to submit budget addendums alongside their SOA District Plans. These budget addendums asked districts to report the amount of spending to be dedicated to their chosen evidence-based practices over the next three fiscal years (FY 2025 to FY 2027), and identify the functional and foundation budget categories that will reflect this spending. The figure below provides an example of the type of data captured through the budget addendums submitted by districts.

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Figure 25. SOA District Plan Budget Addendum Example (Source: DESE)

Evidence Based Program(s)	EOYR Functional Category	EOYR Object	Foundation Budget Object	Foundation Budget	Reportable Costs
1.1A Integrated Services for Student Wellbeing **1.1B** Enhanced Support for SEL and Mental Health **1.1C** Positive School Environments	Guidance, Counseling and Testing	01-Professional Salaries	Salaries - Other	Guidance and Psychological	*Salaries of staff members who spend >80% of their time supporting student health and wellbeing (e.g., adjustment counselors, BCBAs, psychologists, social workers)*
	Guidance, Counseling and Testing	04-Contracted Services	Contractual Services	Guidance and Psychological	*Partnerships with organizations who provide direct mental health services to students*
	Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology	05-Supplies and Materials	Supplies and Materials	Instructional Materials, Equip., and Tech.	*Supplies and materials purchased to support social-emotional learning (SEL) including SEL curriculum*
	Professional Development	04-Contracted Services	Contractual Services	Professional Development	*Vendors who provide professional development or coaching on SEL/mental health topics*
	Operations and Maintenance	05-Supplies and Materials	Supplies and Materials	Operations and Maintenance	*Costs associated with facilities improvement projects (Note: do not include debt funded capital)*
	Benefits and Fixed Charges	04-Contracted Services	Contractual Services	Benefits and Fixed Charges	*Benefits costs associated with FTEs included in this EBP section*

This new financial reporting structure should close critical information gaps that were present during the first three years of SOA implementation and allow the department, districts, policymakers, and the public to more clearly identify the connection between increased state investment, student improvement initiatives, and improved student outcomes.

Conclusion & MTF Recommendations:

As stated at the beginning of this report, inherent in the Commonwealth's approach to public education is the importance of ongoing evaluation and reflection on how Massachusetts serves its students and prepares them for future college and career success.

By providing a comprehensive analysis of the first three years of SOA implementation, critical lessons are learned about the state's success in driving significant new investments towards the highest-need districts across the state and areas for improvement are identified related to tracking how those investments will drive improved student outcomes and achievement over time.

Building off the findings of this report, there are several steps that policymakers, department officials, and school district leaders can take now to ensure that the state does not complete the largest investment in its public schools in a generation without understanding what has been accomplished and to prepare for the next iteration of education finance reform in Massachusetts.

MTF Recommendations:

Fully align SOA-required reporting and annually submitted district financial data. A major piece of missing information from the first three years of SOA implementation is any direct connection between the increased state investments made possible by the new law and actual district spending on the evidence-based programs identified in SOA-required reports. While the SOA Plan

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amendments submitted by districts in FY 2022 and FY 2023 provided valuable information about districts' intentions, many of which may have been fulfilled, without the ability to compare those reports to district expenditure data it is not possible to track actual district spending levels on evidence-based programs. This information is critical because it will allow the state and districts to identify those evidence-based practices that have the greatest success in improving student outcomes over time. Fortunately, the improvements made to the FY 2025 to FY 2027 SOA District Plans explicitly connect investments in evidence-based practices to both district expenditure reports and foundation budget spending categories. This data will be invaluable when comparing districts' intended investments to actual district spending patterns.

Expand SOA-related reporting requirements to all districts. The SOA included additional reporting and data collection requirements for the districts receiving the largest increases in state aid as a result of the new law. These enhanced requirements are well-intentioned; it is paramount that the state collects consistent and accurate information regarding how state dollars are being distributed and how they are being used in service of students. However, as the analysis in this report on actual per-pupil spending trends demonstrates, even districts that are not experiencing large gains in state aid through the SOA are substantially increasing their spending levels on public education. Collecting detailed information from those districts on how they may be using their resources to improve student outcomes and achievement would be invaluable to the process of sharing best practices between districts. Regardless of whether new district spending is driven by increased state aid or enhanced local contributions, if it is being used effectively to improve student outcomes, the state should have an interest in understanding and sharing those strategies.

Develop a plan now for how to incorporate lessons learned from SOA implementation into future education finance reform efforts. In recent years, school finance challenges have emerged regarding the municipal contribution components of the foundation budget formula. Namely, school districts across the state – particularly those that have not experienced large financial benefits through the SOA reforms – have faced increasing local costs, growing required local contributions, and limitations on the amount of revenue that can be raised at the municipal level. As policymakers contemplate the next iteration of education finance reform in Massachusetts, it is critical that lessons learned from SOA implementation are incorporated into those conversations. For example, the current challenges faced by school districts must be clearly identified and the ability of the foundation budget formula to solve those challenges must be understood. If policy proposals result in increased state aid, the intended beneficiaries and the expected outcomes of that new investment must also be clearly communicated. Additionally, reporting requirements related to reform efforts should be streamlined for school districts to the greatest extent possible. As demonstrated throughout this report, the usefulness of new data is limited if it is not aligned with existing requirements. Ultimately, the success of future education reform efforts will require the building of a broad consensus around the factors that have contributed to the current moment and how to build a sustainable path forward. This report aimed to provide the foundation for that consensus-building exercise by providing an unbiased and fact-based progress report on the first three years of SOA implementation and the major trends in school finance.

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Appendix A. Actual Foundation Budget Rates Per-Pupil, Fiscal Year (FY) 2020

	Administration	Instructional Leadership	Teachers	Other Teaching Services	Professional Development	Instructional Materials, Equipment & Technology	Guidance & Psychological Services	Pupil Services	Operations & Maintenance	Employee Benefits & Fixed Charges	Special Education Tuition	Total, All Categories
Pre-school	195.97	353.93	1,622.88	416.22	64.18	234.89	118.08	46.96	450.66	519.38	0.00	4,023.15
Kindergarten-half	195.97	353.93	1,622.88	416.22	64.18	234.89	118.08	46.96	450.66	519.38	0.00	4,023.15
Kindergarten-full	391.93	707.86	3,245.76	832.47	128.42	469.78	236.19	93.97	901.30	1,038.75	0.00	8,046.43
Elementary	391.93	707.86	3,245.72	832.47	128.44	469.78	236.19	140.93	901.30	1,038.78	0.00	8,093.40
Junior/Middle	391.93	707.86	2,856.25	599.25	139.24	469.78	314.38	230.21	977.13	1,069.79	0.00	7,755.82
High school	391.93	707.86	4,200.34	498.88	135.01	751.65	394.09	530.85	947.43	967.85	0.00	9,525.89
Vocational	391.93	707.86	7,140.62	498.88	223.21	1,315.37	394.09	530.85	1,773.15	1,395.84	0.00	14,371.80
Special Ed-in school	2,704.98	0.00	8,925.75	8,333.85	430.57	375.82	0.00	0.00	3,021.59	3,374.83	0.00	27,167.39
Special Ed-out of district	2,802.91	0.00	0.00	42.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26,612.12	29,457.85
English learners PK-5	90.14	157.74	1,104.11	157.74	45.06	112.66	67.60	22.54	270.40	247.86	0.00	2,275.85
English learners 6-8	94.28	164.99	1,154.90	164.99	47.13	117.84	70.71	23.57	282.83	259.26	0.00	2,380.50
English learners high school	73.59	128.79	901.48	128.79	36.79	91.98	55.19	18.40	220.77	202.37	0.00	1,858.15
Economically disadvantaged 1	50.98	241.54	2,357.86	0.00	114.39	17.54	95.48	496.13	0.00	381.40	0.00	3,755.32
Economically disadvantaged 2	51.54	244.20	2,383.92	0.00	115.66	17.73	96.53	501.61	0.00	385.62	0.00	3,796.81
Economically disadvantaged 3	52.10	246.87	2,409.97	0.00	116.92	17.92	97.59	507.09	0.00	389.83	0.00	3,838.29
Economically disadvantaged 4	52.67	249.54	2,436.03	0.00	118.18	18.12	98.64	512.57	0.00	394.05	0.00	3,879.80
Economically disadvantaged 5	53.23	252.21	2,462.09	0.00	119.45	18.31	99.70	518.06	0.00	398.26	0.00	3,921.31
Economically disadvantaged 6	56.89	269.52	2,631.09	0.00	127.65	19.57	106.54	553.62	0.00	425.60	0.00	4,190.48
Economically disadvantaged 7	58.24	275.94	2,693.72	0.00	130.69	20.03	109.08	566.80	0.00	435.73	0.00	4,290.23
Economically disadvantaged 8	59.59	282.36	2,756.36	0.00	133.72	20.50	111.61	579.97	0.00	445.86	0.00	4,389.97
Economically disadvantaged 9	60.95	288.77	2,818.99	0.00	136.76	20.96	114.15	593.15	0.00	455.99	0.00	4,489.72
Economically disadvantaged 10	62.30	295.19	2,881.62	0.00	139.80	21.43	116.69	606.33	0.00	466.13	0.00	4,589.49

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Appendix A. Student Opportunity Act Foundation Budget Per-Pupil Goal Rates, Fiscal Year (FY) 2020

	Administration	Instructional Leadership	Teachers	Other Teaching Services	Professional Development	Instructional Materials, Equipment & Technology	Guidance & Psychological Services	Pupil Services	Operations & Maintenance	Employee Benefits & Fixed Charges	Special Education Tuition	Total, All Categories
Pre-school	195.97	353.93	1,622.88	416.22	64.18	234.89	188.97	46.96	450.66	745.55	0.00	4,320.21
Kindergarten-half	195.97	353.93	1,622.88	416.22	64.18	234.89	188.97	46.96	450.66	745.55	0.00	4,320.21
Kindergarten-full	391.93	707.86	3,245.76	832.47	128.42	469.78	377.95	93.97	901.30	1,491.09	0.00	8,640.53
Elementary	391.93	707.86	3,245.72	832.47	128.44	469.78	377.95	140.93	901.30	1,491.09	0.00	8,687.47
Junior/Middle	391.93	707.86	2,856.25	599.25	139.24	469.78	377.95	230.21	977.13	1,610.72	0.00	8,360.32
High school	391.93	707.86	4,200.34	498.88	135.01	751.65	394.09	530.85	947.43	1,422.01	0.00	9,980.05
Vocational	391.93	707.86	7,140.62	498.88	223.21	1,315.37	394.09	530.85	1,773.15	1,789.60	0.00	14,765.56
Special Ed-in school	2,704.98	0.00	8,925.75	8,333.85	430.57	375.82	0.00	0.00	3,021.59	3,392.84	0.00	27,185.40
Special Ed- out of district	3,450.56	0.00	0.00	52.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,761.24	36,264.51
English learners PK-5	100.50	175.87	1,231.05	175.87	50.24	125.61	75.37	25.13	301.48	276.36	0.00	2,537.48
English learners 6-8	107.79	188.62	1,320.30	188.62	53.89	134.72	80.84	26.95	323.34	296.39	0.00	2,721.46
English learners high school	129.34	226.35	1,584.36	226.35	64.66	161.66	97.00	32.34	388.01	355.67	0.00	3,265.74
Economically disadvantaged 1	47.77	226.34	2,209.55	0.00	107.20	16.43	89.47	464.92	0.00	357.41	0.00	3,519.09
Economically disadvantaged 2	50.76	240.49	2,347.65	0.00	113.90	17.46	95.06	493.98	0.00	379.75	0.00	3,739.05
Economically disadvantaged 3	53.74	254.64	2,485.75	0.00	120.60	18.49	100.66	523.04	0.00	402.09	0.00	3,958.99
Economically disadvantaged 4	56.73	268.78	2,623.85	0.00	127.30	19.51	106.25	552.09	0.00	424.43	0.00	4,178.94
Economically disadvantaged 5	59.71	282.93	2,761.94	0.00	134.00	20.54	111.84	581.15	0.00	446.77	0.00	4,398.88
Economically disadvantaged 6	66.88	316.88	3,093.38	0.00	150.07	23.01	125.26	650.89	0.00	500.38	0.00	4,926.75
Economically disadvantaged 7	74.05	350.83	3,424.81	0.00	166.15	25.47	138.68	720.63	0.00	553.99	0.00	5,454.61
Economically disadvantaged 8	81.21	384.78	3,756.24	0.00	182.23	27.94	152.10	790.36	0.00	607.60	0.00	5,982.46
Economically disadvantaged 9	88.38	418.74	4,087.68	0.00	198.31	30.40	165.52	860.10	0.00	661.21	0.00	6,510.34
Economically disadvantaged 10	95.54	452.69	4,419.11	0.00	214.39	32.87	178.94	929.84	0.00	714.83	0.00	7,038.21
Economically disadvantaged 11	107.49	509.27	4,971.50	0.00	241.19	36.97	201.31	1,046.07	0.00	804.18	0.00	7,917.98
Economically disadvantaged 12	119.43	565.86	5,523.89	0.00	267.99	41.08	223.68	1,162.30	0.00	893.53	0.00	8,797.76

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Appendix B. Operating School Districts by MTF Decile & Priority Designation

District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Abington	6	
Acushnet	6	
Agawam	8	
Amesbury	6	
Amherst	6	
Andover	2	
Arlington	1	
Ashland	4	
Attleboro	7	
Auburn	5	
Avon	8	
Barnstable	9	
Bedford	2	
Belchertown	4	
Bellingham	6	
Belmont	2	
Berkley	4	
Beverly	6	
Billerica	5	
Boston	10	
Bourne	6	
Boxford	1	
Braintree	5	
Brewster	7	
Brimfield	6	
Brockton	10	Yes
Brookfield	7	
Brookline	2	
Burlington	3	
Cambridge	7	
Canton	3	
Carlisle	1	
Carver	5	
Chelmsford	3	
Chelsea	10	
Chicopee	10	
Clarksburg	7	
Clinton	9	
Cohasset	1	
Concord	1	
Conway	5	
Danvers	4	
Dartmouth	5	
Dedham	5	
Deerfield	4	
Douglas	4	
Dover	1	
Dracut	7	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Duxbury	1	
East Bridgewater	5	
Eastham	9	
Easthampton	7	
East Longmeadow	5	
Easton	3	
Edgartown	9	
Erving	8	
Everett	10	Yes
Fairhaven	7	
Fall River	10	Yes
Falmouth	7	
Fitchburg	10	
Florida	8	
Foxborough	4	
Framingham	9	
Franklin	2	
Gardner	10	
Georgetown	2	
Gloucester	8	
Grafton	3	
Granby	7	
Greenfield	10	
Hadley	5	
Halifax	5	
Hancock	7	
Hanover	2	
Harvard	1	
Hatfield	4	
Haverhill	10	
Hingham	1	
Holbrook	8	
Holland	7	
Holliston	2	
Holyoke	10	
Hopedale	4	
Hopkinton	1	
Hudson	6	
Hull	6	
Ipswich	3	
Kingston	4	
Lawrence	10	Yes
Lee	8	
Leicester	7	
Lenox	4	
Leominster	9	
Leverett	3	
Lexington	1	
Lincoln	3	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Littleton	2	
Longmeadow	2	
Lowell	10	Yes
Ludlow	7	
Lunenburg	4	
Lynn	10	Yes
Lynnfield	2	
Malden	10	
Mansfield	3	
Marblehead	2	
Marion	5	
Marlborough	9	
Marshfield	3	
Mashpee	8	
Mattapoisett	4	
Maynard	4	
Medfield	1	
Medford	7	
Medway	2	
Melrose	2	
Methuen	9	
Middleborough	7	
Middleton	2	
Milford	9	
Millbury	6	
Millis	3	
Milton	2	
Monson	7	
Nahant	3	
Nantucket	7	
Natick	2	
Needham	1	
New Bedford	10	Yes
Newburyport	2	
Newton	2	
Norfolk	1	
North Adams	10	
Northampton	5	
North Andover	4	
North Attleborough	4	
Northborough	3	
Northbridge	7	
North Brookfield	9	
North Reading	2	
Norton	5	
Norwell	1	
Norwood	7	
Oak Bluffs	8	
Orange	10	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Orleans	8	
Oxford	8	
Palmer	9	
Peabody	8	
Pelham	3	
Pembroke	3	
Petersham	6	
Pittsfield	10	
Plainville	5	
Plymouth	6	
Plympton	3	
Provincetown	9	
Quincy	9	
Randolph	10	
Reading	2	
Revere	10	Yes
Richmond	5	
Rochester	4	
Rockland	8	
Rockport	5	
Rowe	9	
Salem	10	
Sandwich	4	
Saugus	8	
Savoy	9	
Scituate	2	
Seekonk	3	
Sharon	2	
Sherborn	1	
Shrewsbury	3	
Shutesbury	5	
Somerset	6	
Somerville	9	
Southampton	3	
Southborough	1	
Southbridge	10	
South Hadley	6	
Springfield	10	Yes
Stoneham	4	
Stoughton	8	
Sturbridge	3	
Sudbury	1	
Sunderland	6	
Sutton	3	
Swampscott	4	
Swansea	5	
Taunton	10	
Tewksbury	4	
Tisbury	9	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Topsfield	1	
Truro	9	
Tyngsborough	4	
Uxbridge	5	
Wakefield	3	
Wales	9	
Walpole	2	
Waltham	9	
Ware	10	
Wareham	10	
Warwick	9	
Watertown	6	
Wayland	1	
Webster	10	
Wellesley	1	
Wellfleet	8	
Westborough	2	
West Boylston	5	
West Bridgewater	5	
Westfield	8	
Westford	1	
Westhampton	5	
Weston	1	
Westport	6	
West Springfield	9	
Westwood	1	
Weymouth	7	
Whately	4	
Williamsburg	6	
Wilmington	2	
Winchendon	9	
Winchester	1	
Winthrop	7	
Woburn	7	
Worcester	10	Yes
Worthington	7	
Wrentham	2	
Northampton Smith	7	
Acton Boxborough	2	
Hoosac Valley	10	
Amherst Pelham	5	
Ashburnham Westminster	4	
Athol Royalston	10	
Ayer Shirley	5	
Berkshire Hills	7	
Berlin Boylston	3	
Blackstone Millville	6	
Bridgewater Raynham	5	
Chesterfield Goshen	7	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Central Berkshire	8	
Concord Carlisle	1	
Dennis Yarmouth	9	
Dighton Rehoboth	3	
Dover Sherborn	1	
Dudley Charlton	6	
Nauset	6	
Farmington River	8	
Freetown Lakeville	4	
Frontier	5	
Gateway	8	
Groton Dunstable	1	
Gill Montague	9	
Hamilton Wenham	1	
Hampden Wilbraham	4	
Hampshire	3	
Hawlemont	9	
King Philip	3	
Lincoln Sudbury	1	
Manchester Essex	2	
Marthas Vineyard	7	
Masconomet	1	
Mendon Upton	2	
Monomoy	7	
Mount Greylock	5	
Mohawk Trail	8	
Narragansett	7	
Nashoba	2	
New Salem Wendell	8	
Northboro Southboro	2	
North Middlesex	5	
Old Rochester	3	
Pentucket	3	
Pioneer	6	
Quabbin	6	
Ralph C Mahar	9	
Silver Lake	4	
Somerset Berkley	4	
Southern Berkshire	8	
Southwick Tolland Granville	6	
Spencer East Brookfield	8	
Tantasqua	5	
Triton	5	
Upisland	6	
Wachusett	3	
Quaboag	8	
Whitman Hanson	5	
Assabet Valley	8	
Blackstone Valley	3	

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District	MTF LI Decile	Priority District?
Blue Hills	7	
Bristol Plymouth	6	
Cape Cod	9	
Essex North Shore	4	
Franklin County	8	
Greater Fall River	8	
Greater Lawrence	10	
Greater New Bedford	9	
Greater Lowell	9	
South Middlesex	9	
Minuteman	3	
Montachusett	6	
Northern Berkshire	8	
Nashoba Valley	6	
Northeast Metropolitan	9	
Old Colony	4	
Pathfinder	8	
Shawsheen Valley	4	
Southeastern	8	
South Shore	6	
Southern Worcester	6	
Tri County	4	
Upper Cape Cod	8	
Whittier	7	
Bristol County	6	
Norfolk County	3	

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Appendix C. District Expenditure Functional Categories

Functional Category	Category Code	Description
Administration	ADMN	School Committee, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, District-Wide Administration, Business and Finance, Human Resources, Legal Services
Instructional Leadership	LDRS	District and School-level Curriculum Directors and Department Heads, School Leadership, Administration Technology Support, Instructional Coordinators.
Teachers	TCHR	Teacher Salaries
Other Teaching Services	TSER	Medical/Therapeutic Services, Substitute Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Librarians, Distance Learning and Online Coursework
Professional Development	PDEV	Professional Development Leadership, Instructional Coaches, Teacher Stipends, Professional Development Training and Expenses
Out-of-District Tuition	TUIT	Tuition for School Choice, Charter Schools, Out-of-State Schools, Non-Public Schools, and Collaboratives
Instructional Materials	MATL	Textbooks, Instructional Equipment, Classroom Supplies, Student and Staff Devices, Software
Guidance & Counseling	GUID	Adjustment Counselors, Testing and Assessments, Psychological Services
Pupil Services	SERV	Attendance and Parent Liaison Services, Medical/Health Services, Transportation, Food Services, Athletics, School Security
Operations & Maintenance	OPMN	Custodial Services, Utilities, Ground Maintenance, Building Maintenance, Building Security, Technology Infrastructure Maintenance
Insurance & Retirement Programs	BENE	Employer Retirement Contributions, Insurance for Active and Retired Employees, Lease Costs, Short Term Interest, School Crossing Guards
Out-of-District Transportation	ODTR	Charter Transportation Tuition

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