

#FUNDTHEFORMULA CAMPAIGN

Prioritizing \$550M for Schools in the Governor's FY27 Budget and State of the State Address

JAN – FEB

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

The Time to Act on Behalf of Illinois' Students is Now!

Call for \$550M for Schools (\$450M for the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) Formula and \$100M for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs) in FY27).



About Funding Illinois' Future



We are a coalition of more than 100 school districts, leaders, parents, educators, community, civic, and faith-based organizations that helped fix Illinois' school funding formula in 2017 with our fierce advocacy for the historic implementation of the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula.

Today, we continue our fight for equitable and adequate funding for all K-12 schools and providing every Illinois student with the excellent education they deserve.

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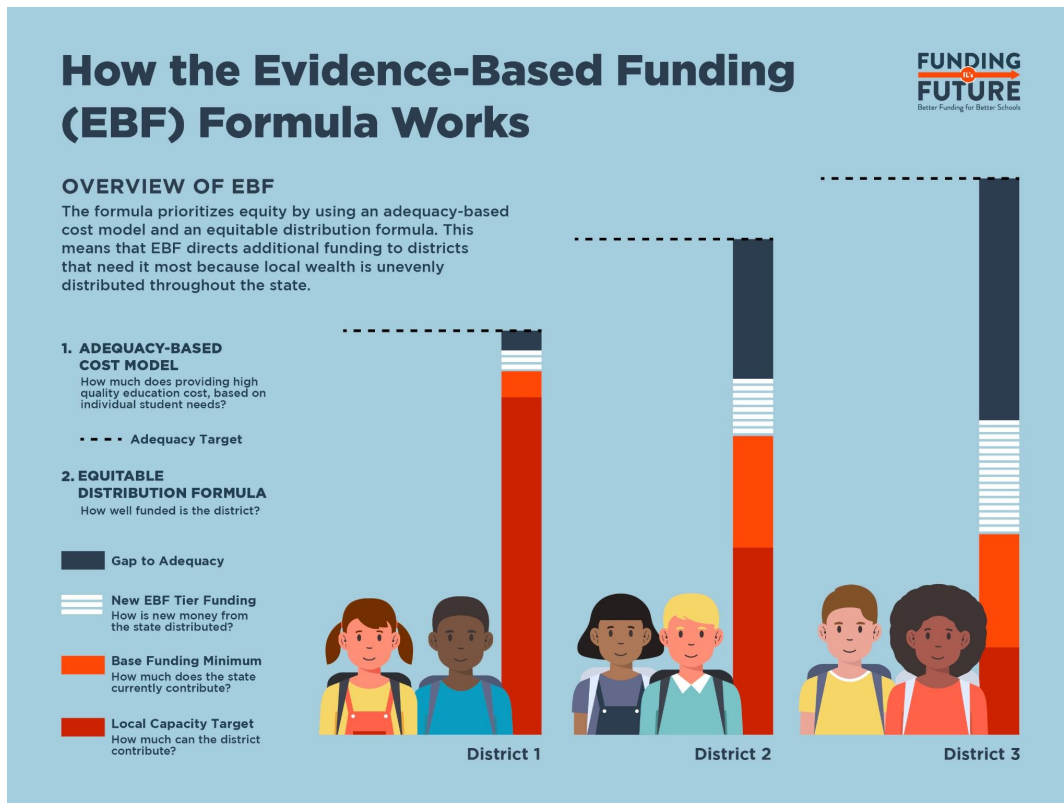
“Let's fund our students' future because now more than ever our education is under threat and attack. In the state of Illinois, we need adequate funding for kids to continue to learn and be taught safely and appropriately. Our school district here in South Berwin is only getting 80% of the funding that they need for our students, and I want kids to have 100% in every district to learn and have the supports that they need.”

— Educator and Advocate from Berwyn, Illinois

About the Evidence-Based Funding Formula (EBF)

In 2017, the landmark Evidence-based Funding (EBF) formula overhauled Illinois' existing K-12 education funding system, replacing an outdated and inequitable structure with a formula that prioritizes the state's least well-funded districts, distributes funds based on a research-based estimate of what schools need to fully serve students, and considers differences in student needs across districts.

The EBF formula was designed to address long-standing funding inequities in Illinois' K-12 education systems. [The Evidence-Based Funding \(EBF\) formula](#) calculates education costs based on student needs and distributes new state dollars to school districts furthest from full funding. This is possible only when the state invests additional amounts through the formula each year.



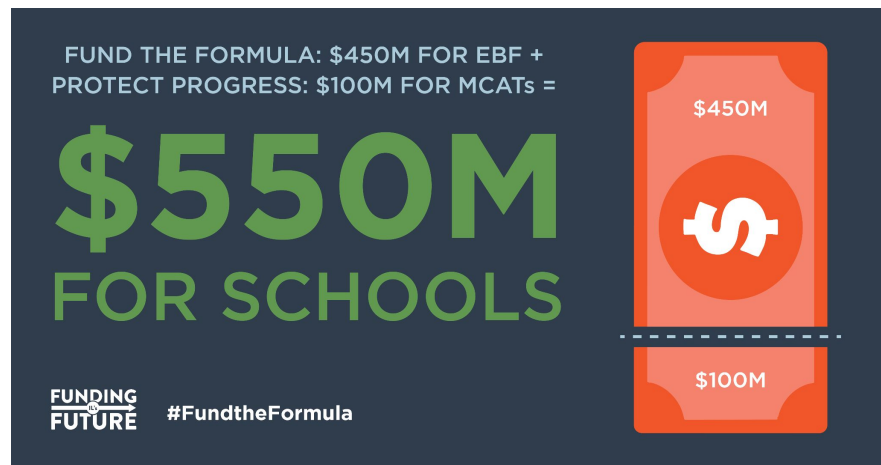
About Mandated Categoricals (MCATs)

Mandated Categoricals (MCATs) are **state grants earmarked for specific programs or student populations**, as required by statute. These funds can only be used for their designated purpose and are essential for covering critical student services **not included in the EBF formula**. MCATs include:

- Illinois Free Lunch & Breakfast Program
- Orphanage Tuition
- Special Education – Orphanage Tuition
- Special Education – Private Tuition
- Transportation – Special Education
- Transportation – Regular/Vocational

Two MCATs must be fully funded each year by law: orphanage tuition and special education orphanage tuition. The remaining programs are **prorated—meaning districts are reimbursed only for a portion of their costs**. In FY26, MCAT appropriations fell short of district claims by more than \$500 million, leaving schools to fill the gap.

When MCATs are underfunded, districts must divert EBF dollars to cover legally mandated costs—**diluting the impact of EBF and perpetuating inequity**. Increasing MCAT funding by **\$100 million** in FY27 will help stabilize district budgets, ensure compliance with state mandates, and allow EBF investments to reach classrooms where they're needed most.



Urge Governor Pritzker to Prioritize an investment of \$550M for Schools in FY27



Advocates,

We need your help to ensure Governor Pritzker prioritizes an increased **\$550 million for schools in the FY27 budget**.

Governor Pritzker has been a consistent champion for education, and his commitment to the **Evidence-Based Funding (EBF)** formula has been vital to Illinois' academic recovery and progress toward equity. We are grateful for his leadership and the strides made since EBF's passage in 2017.

But as we look toward the goal of fully funding Illinois public schools, the stakes are higher than ever for students, educators, and communities across the state.



Since its inception, EBF has reduced the number of **severely underfunded districts**—those below 70% of adequacy—from **459 to just 56**, proving that sustained investment works. Yet Illinois still faces a **\$3 billion funding shortfall**, and **3 in 4 students** continue to attend underfunded districts.



Inflation and rising costs have weakened the impact of recent increases—**what \$350 million covered in 2017 now costs nearly \$470 million today**. To stay on track toward full funding and ensure schools have the resources and stability they need, we must go further.



Adequately funding MCATs—such as transportation, special education, and free and reduced-price meal programs—**ensures districts can meet basic student needs** without pulling dollars away from classrooms.

Advocates across the state are calling for **\$550 million for schools in FY27**—including **\$450 million for EBF** and **\$100 million for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs)**. Together, these investments strengthen Illinois' commitment to equity and ensure that every student, no matter their ZIP code, background, or income, has access to a high-quality education.

Right now, we need bold action from our leaders to secure the future of Illinois students.

From now through February, we'll share **weekly social media messages, sample letters, and opportunities to submit testimony** to make your voice heard. Use this toolkit to personalize messages and share why increased investment in school funding matters to you and your community.

Act today and share this toolkit with your network. Together, we can make sure the Governor's FY27 budget continues Illinois' progress toward fully and equitably funding our public schools.

Governor Pritzker, prioritize \$550M for Schools: Call for \$450M in EBF and \$100M for MCATs for Illinois Schools in FY27

The time to act on behalf of Illinois students is now. We're calling on Governor Pritzker to prioritize an investment of \$550 million for schools in the FY27 budget—including \$450M for the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula and \$100M for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs).


Since 2017, EBF has transformed the way in which Illinois funds schools, reducing the number of severely underfunded districts from 459 to 56. But rising costs and inflation have weakened the impact of annual increases, leaving three out of four students still in underfunded schools.

An investment of \$550M will keep Illinois on track toward fully and equitably funding our public schools, ensuring that every student—no matter their ZIP code—has access to the high-quality education they deserve.

Join advocates across the state and urge Governor Pritzker to #FundTheFormula and invest \$550M for Illinois schools in FY27.

Contact information

Message

 Illinois Governor

Subject: (Please Tally this Request) Prioritize \$450M for EBF and \$100M for MCATs

Dear [Recipient's Title and Name]:

FY27 Funding IL's Future
Published by HubSpot · December 4, 2025 ·

5 Things to Know About MCATs

- 1 MCATs fund mandated services — schools are legally required to provide them.
- 2 The state currently reimburses less than full cost (as low as \$0.32 for every \$1 spent on meals).
- 3 That creates an estimated \$500M gap statewide.
- 4 When MCATs fall short, districts are forced to dip into Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) dollars meant for student learning.
- 5 Fully funding MCATs strengthens both equity and adequacy.

5 Things to Know about MCATs

1 MCATs fund mandated services

2 The state currently reimburses less than full cost

3 Lack of funding creates an estimated \$500M gap statewide

4 Fully funding MCATs means more money for education

5 Fully funding MCATs strengthens both equity & adequacy

FUNDING FUTURE #FundTheFormula #FundMCATs

“

“EBF helps us provide targeted interventions to our most marginalized students like bilingual support, reading, math, and specialized instructional materials to help close the opportunity gap.”

— Educator from Dekalb, Illinois

Advocacy Toolkit

Act today and share this toolkit with your network.



Together, we can make sure the Governor's FY27 budget continues Illinois' progress toward fully and equitably funding our public schools.

What's in this toolkit:

01 Send a Letter to Governor Pritzker

Elevate the need to invest \$550M for Schools for the upcoming school year. Modify the letter to highlight your experience and let the Governor know why funding is crucial for Illinois' children.

02 Join Us in Social Media Advocacy

Share this toolkit and messages with members of your community. We need everyone's voice behind the #FundtheFormula campaign!

03 Learn About Other Stories

Throughout this toolkit you can learn more about the stories of students, educators, and other advocates from across the state.

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“Our school community is strong but we need money to simply operate in this climate where education particularly education for the most vulnerable is under attack. Our kids are coming to us at the high school level at years behind where they need to be. We need more funding to ensure we are meeting their needs.”

— Illinois Education Advocate

01

Send a letter to Governor Pritzker!

Send a letter to your Governor Pritzker!



Governor Pritzker will be sharing his FY27 budget priorities on February 18 during his State of the State Budget Address. Please take 3–4 minutes to send a letter to the Governor to urge him to prioritize our students in the FY27 state budget.

[Click here to send a letter to the Governor.](#)

01 [Access the letter here](#)

02 Input your name, email, and address

03 In the message box, we encourage you to tailor your message to include 1–2 sentences on why equitable funding in education is essential for your school community!

04 Hit sign up and send!

02

Join Us in Social Media Advocacy

How to Post

Please post using **#FundtheFormula** to help keep the momentum going. Join us for a series of ongoing social media actions to show your support and share your stories of the need to prioritize investing in EBF and MCATs with Governor Pritzker.

STEPS TO SHARE

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2. Download image
3. Publish

OR

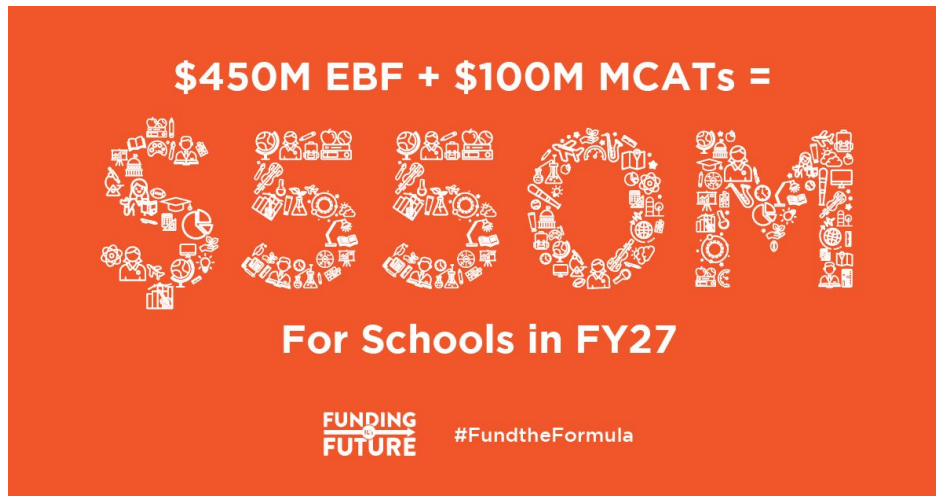
Click to Post on X

Thursday, January 8

Illinois students can't wait. We need bold investment now! \$550M for Schools in FY27: \$450M for EBF + \$100M for MCATs. Let's make sure every child in every district has what they need to thrive. @GovPritzker #FundTheFormula

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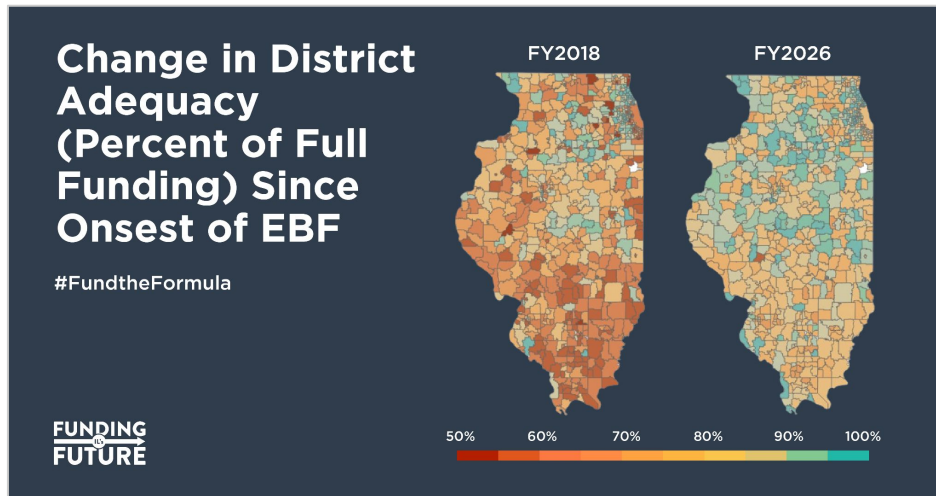


Tuesday, January 13

Since 2017, EBF has added \$2.75B to Illinois schools — cutting severely underfunded districts from 1.2M students to just 150K. Let's keep going, @GovPritzker. #FundTheFormula

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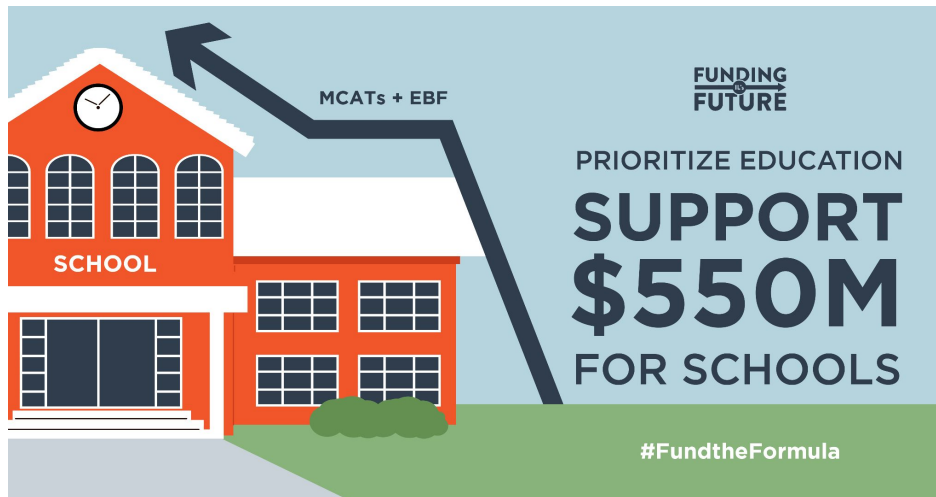


Thursday, January 15

When MCATs fall short, schools scramble – pulling money from key resources like educators and support staff to fill the gap. Invest in MCATs with \$100M in FY27, @GovPritzker.
#FundTheFormula

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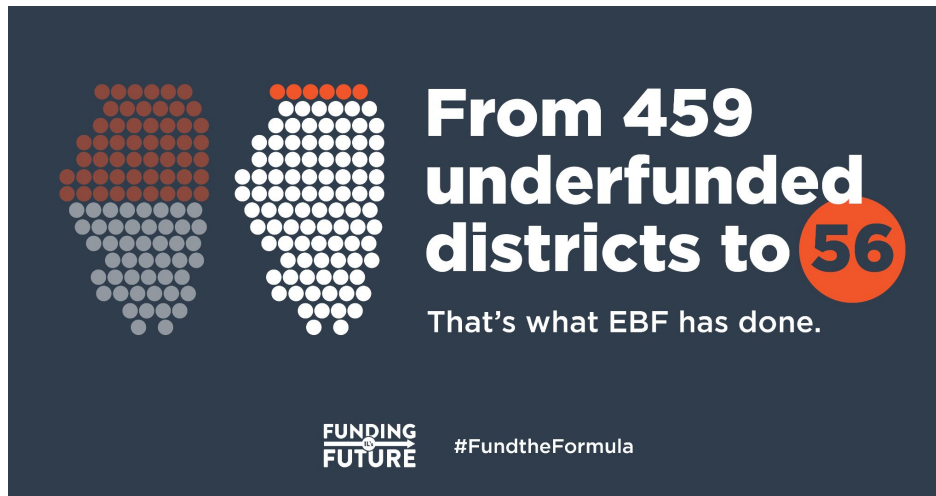


Tuesday, January 20

From 459 underfunded districts to 56. That's what EBF has done. Imagine what \$450M more could do for Illinois students. Keep it going, @GovPritzker. #FundTheFormula

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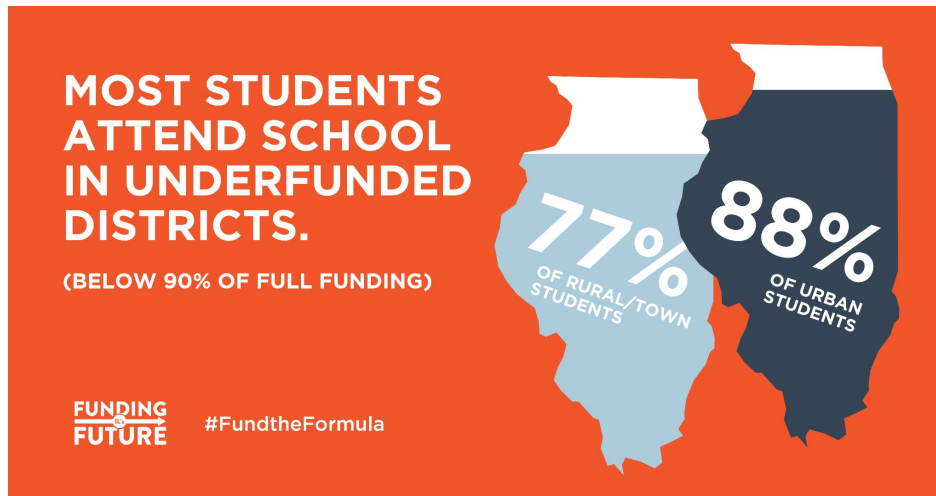


Thursday, January 22

A ZIP code shouldn't determine how schools are funded, yet 3 in 4 students still attend underfunded schools. @GovPritzker, let's change that—\$550M for IL schools in FY27.
#FundTheFormula

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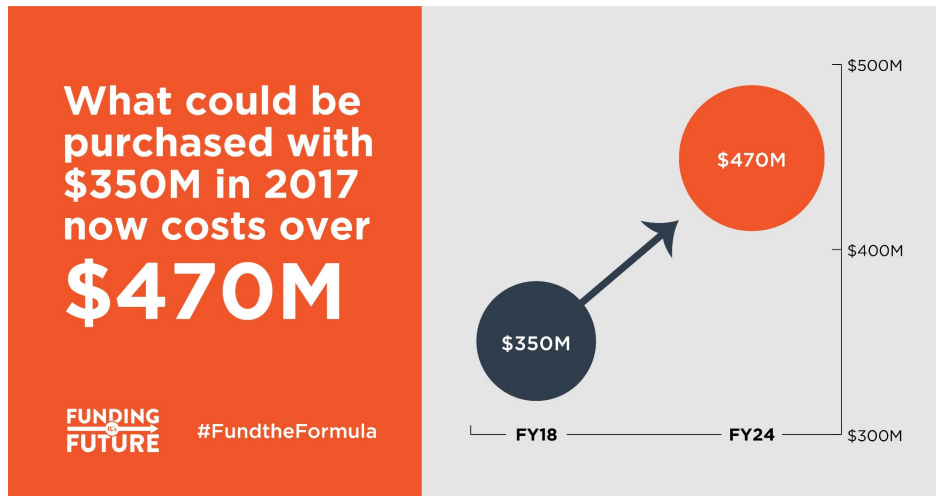
Tuesday, January 27

What \$350M covered in 2017 now costs \$470M today. Inflation hits classrooms, too. Our schools can't do more with less, Illinois must invest \$550M for schools this year.

@GovPritzker #FundTheFormula

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Thursday, January 29

MCATs fund essentials—transportation, special ed, meals. The basics. When those fall short, students pay the price. @GovPritzker, let's fund MCATs. #FundTheFormula

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Tuesday, February 3

EBF + MCATs = equity and stability. Without both, districts struggle to plan, hire, and support students. Let's get it right this year, @GovPritzker. \$550M for schools in FY27.
#FundTheFormula

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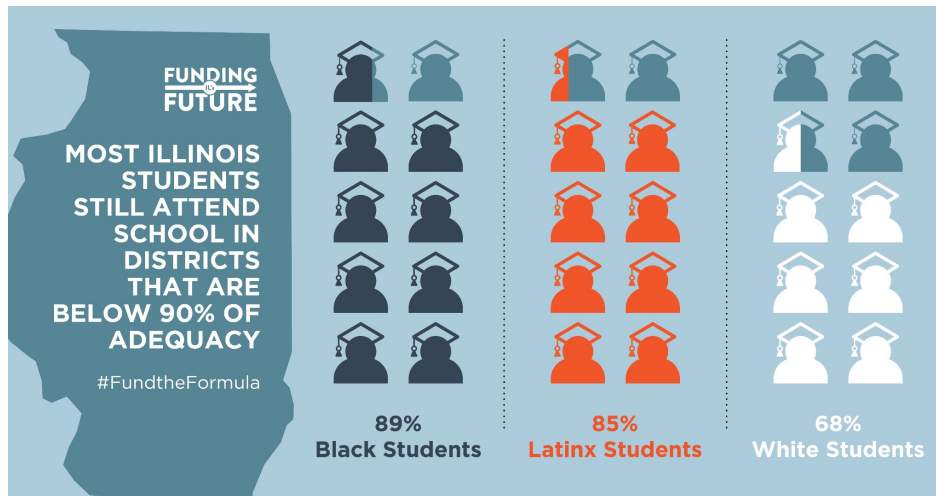


Thursday, February 5

We've seen what steady investment can do. Let's not lose momentum. Equity takes consistency—and courage. \$550M for Illinois schools in FY27, @GovPritzker.
#FundTheFormula

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Tuesday, February 10

Illinois students are counting on us—and on you, @GovPritzker. Let's fund their futures with \$550M for schools in FY27. Investments in education matter. #FundTheFormula

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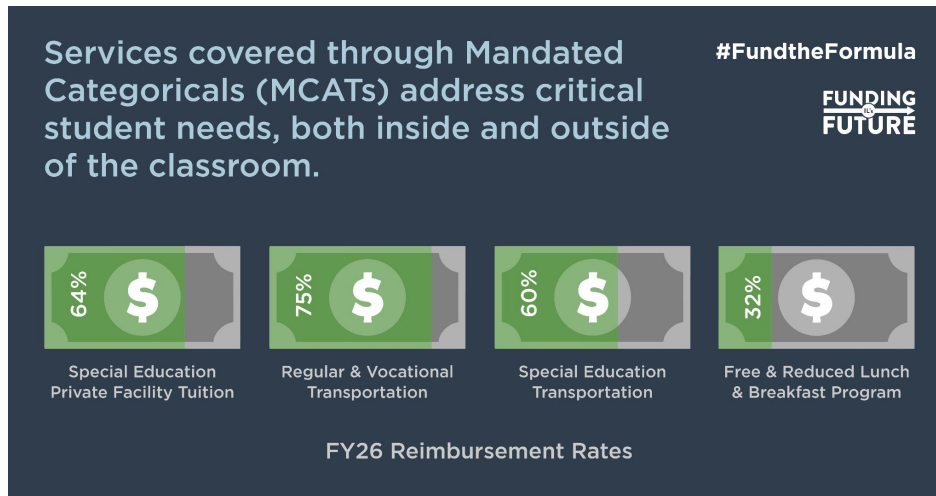


Thursday, February 12

Underfunded MCATs strain EBF dollars. Fully funding both ensures every student has what they need to learn & thrive. @GovPritzker #ILSchools

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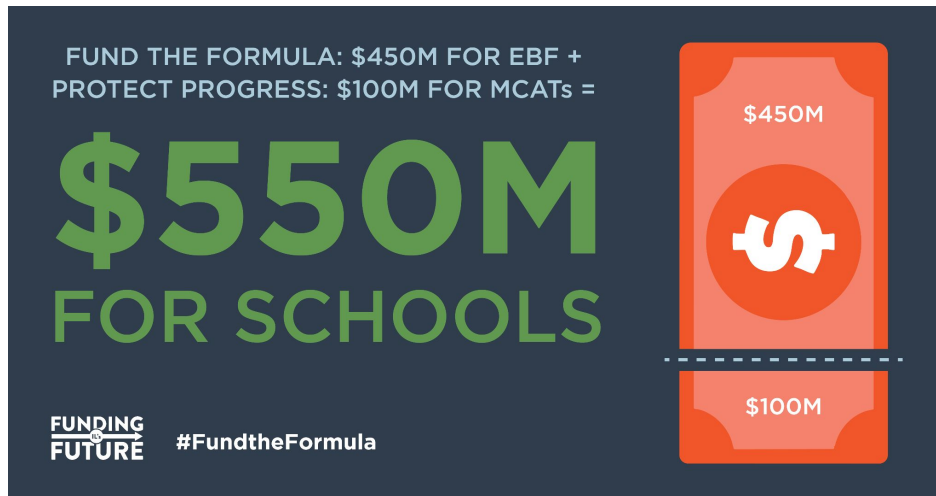


Tuesday, February 17

Big moment ahead. Illinois has the chance to keep equity front and center. @GovPritzker, we're asking for \$550M for schools—\$450M for EBF, \$100M for MCATs. Let's get it done. #FundTheFormula

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THANK
YOU

fundingilfuture.org