



Overview of Stakeholder Feedback to Date *February 2025*

Stakeholders included:

Maine School Management Association (MSSA / MSBA)
Maine Association of School Business Officers (MeASBO)
Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC)
Members of the public who contacted us directly

- The concepts of “essential” and “adequate” are not explicitly defined and are therefore subjective. Expectations have evolved since 2005 when EPS was implemented.
- EPS does not reflect current realities for providing adequate educational services.
 - **District responsibilities and costs have increased, even since FY23** (last data available) per fall 2024 superintendents’ feedback.
 - There has been an increase in positions deemed necessary but these are not included in EPS (e.g. mental health services, MTSS, and instructional coaches).
 - It fails to address the more intense needs of “service center” towns.
 - Homeless student costs are rising sharply. Needs are more intense than economic disadvantage, and perhaps more than Multilingual Learners.
- Rising education costs are straining property tax payers.
 - Many superintendents feel extreme pressure to cut costs.
 - Property values are not always an accurate measure of local homeowner ability to pay. Some districts’ valuation has risen sharply but not all taxpayers’ income has increased.
 - 55% did not solve local tax burden concerns; there is a **desire for a higher target**, especially since amounts budgeted above EPS are all paid locally.
 - There is a strong interest in examination of other methods, including **income**, in determining a district’s contribution to education costs.
- Quality for Maine students relies on individual towns’ commitment to education.
 - Demographic trends within geography and average age of taxpayers play a role.
 - **Ability to pay is not always aligned with willingness to pay.**
 - Pride in “not spending over EPS” vs pride in quality creates unequal and inequitable access to education experiences across the state.
- Some taxpayers in RSUs see “unequal payment for the same services” as problematic. The current EPS funding formula raises the question of “whose kids” individual property owners are paying to educate.
- SPED costs are highly unpredictable and costly.

- The unpredictability is acute in small districts; one family moving into a district can wreak havoc on a budget.
- Many students are going without needed services, especially in rural areas.
- Two examples of suggestions across superintendent groups:
 - Regional behavior programs
 - 100% state funding for SPED, outside of EPS.
- Regional salary adjustments are perceived to be inadequate in lower-salary areas.
 - Most small and rural schools are given same ratios as larger districts. (This is the case except when they are geographically isolated, otherwise known as “small by circumstance.”)
 - **They have lower housing cost but higher costs in other areas.**
 - “Sharing ½ a nurse across buildings doesn’t work.”
- Staffing
 - Intense competition for staff between neighboring districts
 - Inadequate salaries to attract and retain staff at all levels for poorer districts
- Regional Collaboration
 - Nearly 100% of superintendents see benefits of a regional approach to SPED and professional development for teachers. More efficient and better quality overall.
 - However, resources are scarce. “We can’t share what we don’t have.” Relatively wealthier districts will not necessarily want to work regionally because they can now attract a higher proportion of the few resources.
 - Major challenges with regionalization are initiation and implementation.
 - State leadership is necessary. “We can’t do this alone, we just can’t.”
 - Superintendents would be relieved, but some locals may not agree.
 - Staffing shortages and transportation distances are among the biggest concerns.
- Superintendents want to see statewide prioritization conversations so policy decisions can be made for long term stable support for all students and communities.
 - Reexamine what is considered adequate and make sure it is always provided, in all districts, not reliant on local taxpayer decisions.
 - Superintendents know if they “win,” others “lose.” This decreases collaboration. They want “no winners and no losers.”