

We are a group of Teach Plus Mississippi Policy Fellows and classroom teachers from across the state passionate about ensuring every Mississippi student has the high-quality education they deserve. For teachers like us, access to robust data is integral. Making detailed Mississippi Student Funding Formula (MSFF) data available and accessible to the general public will enable teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to remain informed about how their schools are investing resources. This will also help ensure that weighted funding is reaching the students and schools it is intended to serve. In addition, transparent and accessible funding data will help lawmakers better understand the relationship between funding and student outcomes, and what adjustments to the formula may be necessary in the future to ensure schools are meeting the needs of their students. **We encourage the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide detailed MSFF data for each school district in the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card.**

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW FUNDING FORMULA

With the adoption of the MSFF, the Magnolia State made an unprecedented move toward providing equitable funding for our public schools. The weighted student funding formula guarantees significant funding increases for schools while delivering additional necessary funding to low-income students, multilingual learners, and students requiring special education services. However, passing the formula is only the first step. Thoughtful implementation is key. Access to detailed implementation data would show how MSFF dollars are allocated at the district and school levels, which is essential to helping local communities maximize those dollars to benefit students and boost their outcomes.

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENTS

MDE currently provides a wide range of actionable statewide, district-level, and school-level accountability data that is publicly available on the [Public Reporting](#) page of the MDE website. This user-friendly and transparent approach builds trust, promotes engagement, and empowers stakeholders, especially when it comes to local schools and districts.

However, the school finance data currently available on MDE's website is notably limited. While the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card does report a Per-Pupil Expenditure figure for each district and school, stakeholders have to dig into the [Superintendent's Annual Report](#) to locate spreadsheets that detail expenditures by functional areas, revenue sources, and tax information. Stakeholders without a background in research may have difficulty synthesizing and making sense of these disparate data sources to understand how their local schools are generating and investing resources. They may also have a difficult time understanding how their local schools are being funded through the newly adopted weighted student funding formula. While this approach is compliant with transparency requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it does not, in practice, promote stakeholder engagement.

RECOMMENDATION FOR INFORMATION SHARING

In order to ensure transparency of school funding allocations, we recommend that the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card be required to display the following information:

- + Total and per-pupil district funding, disaggregated by source (federal, state, local)
- + Total and per-pupil Mississippi Student Funding Formula funding, disaggregated by formula weight categories
- + Total and per-pupil district expenditures, disaggregated by functional areas (instructional, administrative, capital)
- + If possible, any of the aforementioned data points disaggregated by individual schools within each district

In order to facilitate public engagement in the process of setting annual district budgets, we ask that MDE publish this data in the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card as soon as it becomes available, beginning with the release of 2024-2025 data later this year. Beyond making school finance data more transparent and accessible, we also recommend MDE explore ways to provide additional finance data to the general public in the near future. Additional data could include funding trends across multiple years. It would also include comparisons across districts with similar enrollment of funding levels. This information may be useful in helping policymakers and the general public better understand the relationship between funding levels and academic performance.

CONCLUSION

With the passing of the weighted-student funding formula, we have a unique opportunity for communities to engage in important conversations about how to best leverage new funding to meet the needs of students and boost their overall achievement. Ensuring that funding data is available and easily accessible is a critical first step in making sure that this historic investment in Mississippi's children will prepare them for success during and after their K-12 experiences. We look forward to working with policymakers on the new funding formula's implementation and on bringing transparency to the data sharing process.

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About Teach Plus

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning for students.

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