



Essential Programs and Services (EPS) Study Overview Fall 2024

In April 2024 the Maine legislature passed a [Resolve](#) (LD 2286) that tasks the Maine Educational Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), in collaboration with the Maine Department of Education, with studying various aspects of the EPS formula. MEPRI will approach these tasks involving both data analysis and stakeholder feedback. A final report will be shared with the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee in March 2025.

Part I: General Trends

In order to frame the study, we will explore changes in the educational cost landscape since the development and implementation of EPS in the early 2000s.

- Compilation of historical data on enrollments and staffing levels, both statewide and by county. How have teacher and educational technician staff ratios changed over time?
- Per-pupil spending trends in selected cost areas, both statewide and by county. (total, regular instruction, special education, student & staff support, operation & maintenance).
- Comparison of actual spending to EPS total allocations (i.e. over/under EPS reports) over time and by region.

Part II: Subsidy, Ability to Pay, and Property Valuation (Resolve 1A, 1B, 1D)

A. Background and Context

- Overview of current method and assumptions
- Description of current sources of revenue for the state and local shares of the cost of public education
- Description of mechanisms used in other states for distributing state aid

B. Analysis Plan

- Comparison of per capita property valuation to household income and other available measures of community wealth / ability to pay
- Collection of more detailed valuation data from municipal representatives to allow further exploration of property tax burden patterns
- Description of data needed for further analyses

C. Stakeholder Engagement

Workshop at MSMA conference; survey opportunities

Part III: Regional Cost Variation (Resolve 1A, 1C, 2B)

A. Background and Context

- Overview of regional costs and labor markets.
- Summary review of prior findings about factors related to teacher turnover and regional patterns in teacher qualifications (experience and education).

B. Analysis Plan

- Analysis of regional variation & summary of findings.
 - Calculation and comparison of teacher and ed tech salary patterns in each region (county).
 - Calculation and comparison of teacher and ed tech benefit (and benefit percentage) patterns in each region (county).
 - Comparison of actual salary regional variation and total compensation variation (including benefits) to cost of living index estimates.
- Comparison of total resources allocated for teachers and educational technicians to actual expenditures, both statewide and regionally. Include analysis before and after regional adjustment, and using both basic and weighted pupil counts.
- Comparison of various methods of calculating regional adjustment:
 - Current practice
 - Updated floor and ceiling
 - Cost-of-living method (adjusting only upward from a base/foundation level)
 - Eliminating the adjustment

C. Stakeholder Engagement

Feedback from stakeholders including MSSA, MSBA & MeASBO on the policy options above

Part IV: Special Education (Resolve 2A)

A. Analysis plan

- Summarize prior findings that establish the need to update the model
- Prepare multiple options for categorizing special education costs into a streamlined model. Include options for:
 - Student weights based on intensity of services provided
 - Revised treatment of MaineCare-eligible costs
 - Cost-sharing system for unpredictable expenses
 - Discussion of regional programs and infrastructure options
- Use stakeholder input to select options for MDOE modeling
- Outline research questions and next steps related to adequacy of current services

B. Stakeholder Engagement

Surveys of district administrators (superintendents and finance directors);
feedback sessions conducted at statewide MADSEC conference.

Part V: Other Cost Model Analyses (Resolve 2A, 2D)

A. Analysis Plan

- Options for Gifted and Talented cost model improvements
- Review of “purple sheet” subsidy adjustments (Title 20-A Sections 15688-A, 15689 and 15689-A, including CTE)
- Summary description of “minimum receiver” subsidy adjustments (Title 20-A Sec. 15689, Part 1)

B. Stakeholder Engagement

- Surveys of district administrators on general topics related to educational cost drivers and the evolving needs of public education systems
- Surveys of district administrators on other specific EPS components
- Feedback sessions conducted at statewide conferences and meetings, including MSMA, MeASBO, and MADSEC

Part VI: Other General Stakeholder Engagement

- A public feedback portal to capture comments from everyone who wishes to share their experiences and insights.
- Regular meetings with MSSA funding committee & MEPRI steering committee
- Attendance at regional superintendent meetings in early fall to discuss study approach and October conference activities.
- If needed, potential use of Education 2050 project findings to fill gaps or bolster findings from other sources, e.g. compile input on what is considered “adequate” in 2025 (and beyond).