

MAE’s Local Funding Input Collection Summary

How should your district’s allocation of the \$100 million in extra school funding be utilized?

[Using the MAE website as a story collection tool](#), we posed the question above regarding the extra \$100 million of funding included in the 2023-24 school year Department of Education appropriation bill to members, parents, and supporters of public schools. After rigorous data collection, we have assembled a collection of answers that represent the major trends expressed to us.

Below are some thought-provoking responses that we hope will help enlighten school superintendents and other fiscal decision-makers on important needs the funding can help alleviate. Each paragraph represents an individual submission, some of which have been edited for clarity.

Moreover, we believe that in addition to providing meaningful information and insights, educators, school staff, and parents should be incorporated into the local decision-making regarding the utilization of this funding and other fiscal decisions that impact our students in the classroom and at school. Our members stand ready to offer insight and to be partners in ensuring that stronger schools make for a stronger Mississippi.

“I trust Mississippi educators to know the resources they need to educate each child who enters their classroom. Mississippi teachers deserve my respect and everyone else’s. They are especially deserving of immense respect from every legislator in this state. Educators are heroes. They’ve gone to school to become professionals in the field of education, so my job as a parent or a member of the community is not to tell teachers how to teach nor to blindly do whatever the school suggests I do. My job is to be an informed and equal partner with educators, so that all Mississippi children can be educated well and equitably.”

---Mississippi Parent

1. I would like to see funding for academic extracurricular programs such as robotics competition teams, Science Olympiad competition teams, Academic teams, MathCounts, etc. These programs provide opportunities for our students to grow and develop, but also to shine as leaders inside and outside of the classroom. Currently, the these types of programs receive little to no funding from schools, district, or state funds and are expected to raise money to cover costs of transportation, preparation materials, substitute teachers, competition registration, etc. If academic extracurricular programs were funded the same as athletic programs are funded, these students and their teachers could do so much more.
2. Our historic school has a lot that doesn’t work, including locks on gates. In today’s society, every scholar deserves a safe learning environment.

3. We need extra funding to help districts hire more teachers to reduce student numbers, especially in the foundational elementary grades (K, 1st, and 2nd). Having 24-27 students in a kindergarten or first grade classroom is ridiculous! Many of our students come to school with little to no educational experience, and we are completely outnumbered!
4. I am a janitor at [Attendance Center]. Our kids are normally left out in terms of funding. These teachers need more resources and supplies for their classrooms. While I feel that sports are important for these kids, we need more help in the classrooms! We live in a low-income school district and never get half of what these larger schools have. Our elementary [school] needs updating. If you took a walk through our school, you will notice how outdated our facilities are. For the most part it feels like our school is always looked over and no one cares enough to invest in our kids' education and futures.
5. Funding needs to go to teaching children with learning disabilities. Children with Dyslexia are just put aside in our district until they reach 3rd grade. By then the child has had their self esteem torn down. [They are} constantly being put aside and told they are not trying when the truth is they cannot read the material. They need dyslexia therapists, not a standard teacher. There are other learning disabilities also that that need special attention. These children do not need to be labeled Special Ed. There is so much emphasis put on sensitive words and actions to others, how do the words Special Ed make a child feel? Stop labeling them and spend the money on classes to help these children.
6. Hiring more teachers for smaller class size. This will possibly help with discipline, teacher burnout, and academics.
7. Additional funding for school programs like art and music education, vocational education, and gifted/special education Resources to maintain and purchase school buses and meet other transportation needs Ensure high-quality educator recruitment and retention through educator pay and benefits
8. Funding must go to the teachers and students...NOT to administration and educational bureaucracy. (1) provide mentorship programs for young teachers, (2) develop opportunities for college graduates with degrees in math, sciences, agriculture to partner with schools in teaching critical subjects (3) testing for all 9th graders to assess natural talents and interests (4) additional counselors to help personalize opportunities for students to move on a path of work force development or college (5) provide funds for vocational and technological infrastructure, teachers, equipment (6) additional reading specialists to work in lower school K through 3 to insure all read by 3rd grade
9. We need more TAs (Teacher Assistants) and interventionists from PreK to 3rd grade, especially in schools with no inclusion classes.
10. Schools need updated desks that aren't broken, and Chromebook's that aren't falling apart or missing pieces so they actually work. I would like to get paid for being the school test coordinator. I've been doing it for free for 6 years and working outside contracted hours to get the job done b/c no one else will do it for lack of funding to pay someone.
11. Hire dyslexia therapists at all the schools! Dyslexic kids are getting left behind and ignored. Parents have to use our own money to find help for our kids because the teachers don't know how to teach dyslexic kids. 20 percent of the population is dyslexic, and 20 percent of kids are not getting the help they need from the public schools.

12. This funding can provide another pay raise for educators to attract qualified professionals to the field of education within the classroom and maintain the current teachers they already have.
13. We need extra funding to help districts hire more teachers to reduce student numbers, especially in the foundational elementary grades (K, 1st, and 2nd). Having 24-27 students in a kindergarten or first grade classroom is ridiculous! Many of our students come to school with little to no educational experience, and we are completely outnumbered!
14. Up to date resources, software programs, Wi-Fi accessibility, NEW textbooks- printed and digital, extra classroom aids, technology facilitators.
15. I'm sure funding cannot go for this; however, we need infrastructure improvements [in our district]. We have exterior doors that do not lock. Restrooms that have no running water at sinks. Flooding in buildings when we get a heavy rain and many other issues. We have enough resources for teachers and students, but we are in desperate need of building improvements.
16. Security coming in and out of school, classroom material, school supplies, books, computers books, new desks, chairs for teachers and assistant teachers, and comfortable classrooms.
17. All schools should give their cafeteria staff and custodians a starting hourly fee of \$15 per hr. -- more compensation for the cafeteria staff, custodians, and teacher assistants.
18. The rise in behavior our students exhibit post-pandemic shows that teachers need more support in the classroom. Teachers cannot teach students who want to learn when other students misbehave. Funding for more teaching assistants in the classroom would benefit students and teachers. Teaching assistants can help teachers close the learning gaps by providing an extra person to support students.
19. Students with severe behavior problems and students with consistent drug use in school should have more resources and access to help them try to overcome those difficulties that are preventing them from succeeding.
20. Funding could be used to provide equitable instructional supports such as literacy and math interventionists at elementary schools that are rural or high poverty locations. It could also provide PD sessions to allow administrative and instructional PD opportunities to visit areas to gain more knowledge about using evidence- based best practices that are differentiated and data driven. More importantly, it could also be used to enhance our learning experiences through the assistance with improving the virtual or hybrid models for education so that we may be prepared for any platform of instructional delivery. I would also request that SEL support staff is considered to become essential due to the traumatic experiences we have encountered since the pandemic. Please also consider innovative ways to diminish our current teacher shortages.
21. The funding can best be used for more technology for students and educators, upgrading the school facilities, and higher salaries for teachers and assistant teachers.

22. Hi! Glory to God! I think the money should be focused on the rural school districts.
23. More instructional materials for hands-on learning and updated technology for student use The upkeep and repair of your classrooms, schools, and facilities Additional funding for school programs like art and music education, vocational education, and gifted/special education Resources to maintain and purchase school buses and meet other transportation needs Ensure high-quality educator recruitment and retention through educator pay and benefits.
24. As teacher leader, teachers talk to me often. The other day, I had an art teacher come to me frustrated because she is having to use money out of her pocket to buy art supplies. The EEF money doesn't go as far with some teachers as it does others. So, I believe that with an increased education budget, more funds should be put toward the arts so that educators will have the funds needed to enhance the learning experience for their students.
25. I have taught in the public schools more than 18 years, and I believe that there are many ways schools can be improved and this funding will definitely help. For starters, our buildings need repairs, and we should not allow teaching and learning to take place in run down conditions. The upkeep of our buildings should not be neglected. We must ensure that we pay our educators adequately to ensure that we hire and retain high-quality educators. We have been underpaid for too long. Teaching is one profession that should be never be taken for granted and teachers deserve to be paid for all that they do on a daily basis. Next, we need to pay our bus drivers the salary they deserve to retain them and secure enough drivers so they do not have to complete double and triple routes. This funding should also support school programs like art and music education, vocational education, as well as gifted/special education. Last, but not to be overlooked, we must provide more instructional materials for hands-on learning and updated technology to support innovative teaching that will adequately prepare our students for their future careers.
26. I am a music educator at {} High School. For years, our music programs have been suffering. This is especially true in the Choral Music arena. Our funds are so limited that most our choral music classes do not have fully working instruments or digital technologies to work with our students. Our students are special to us and are eager to learn music. Many of our students are highly advanced students who lead the school in academics. Yet, we are often left at the end of the line to receive much needed items. Some of the items are uniforms, like dresses and tuxedos or Robes. Many of our students cannot afford to purchase or rent their own uniforms. Another much-needed item is fully working pianos. Today music composition has gone mostly to digital music. Yet our schools do not reflect this in our instruments. Mostly all the High Schools do not have a working piano. I suggest a digital working piano in every class. The piano I purchased was from car washes and candy sales. It never needs to be tuned or has it needed to be fixed in the 5 years since we purchased it. Another need for the choral music department is at least 3 festivals a year to allow students to perform more. Paid PD for our students and teachers locally would help our students to expand their motivation to work hard with those like them.
27. [] County schools desperately need more Counselors/Occupational therapists/Speech therapists. Everyone deserves an equal chance at life and right now only the emotionally and physically healthy are able to succeed to their full potential due to non-staffing issues. Can you offer higher pay to counselors and have a designated counselor for each campus? I think we will soon find out that a safe counselor on each campus who interacts with the kids daily is going to be our number one defense against suicide and school shootings with the skyrocketing increase of post-pandemic anxiety and depression diagnoses in children right now.



May 3, 2023 – A collection of stories by Mississippi educators, parents, support staff and others concerning needs that should be addressed by the \$100 million appropriation available for school year 2023-2024.

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