



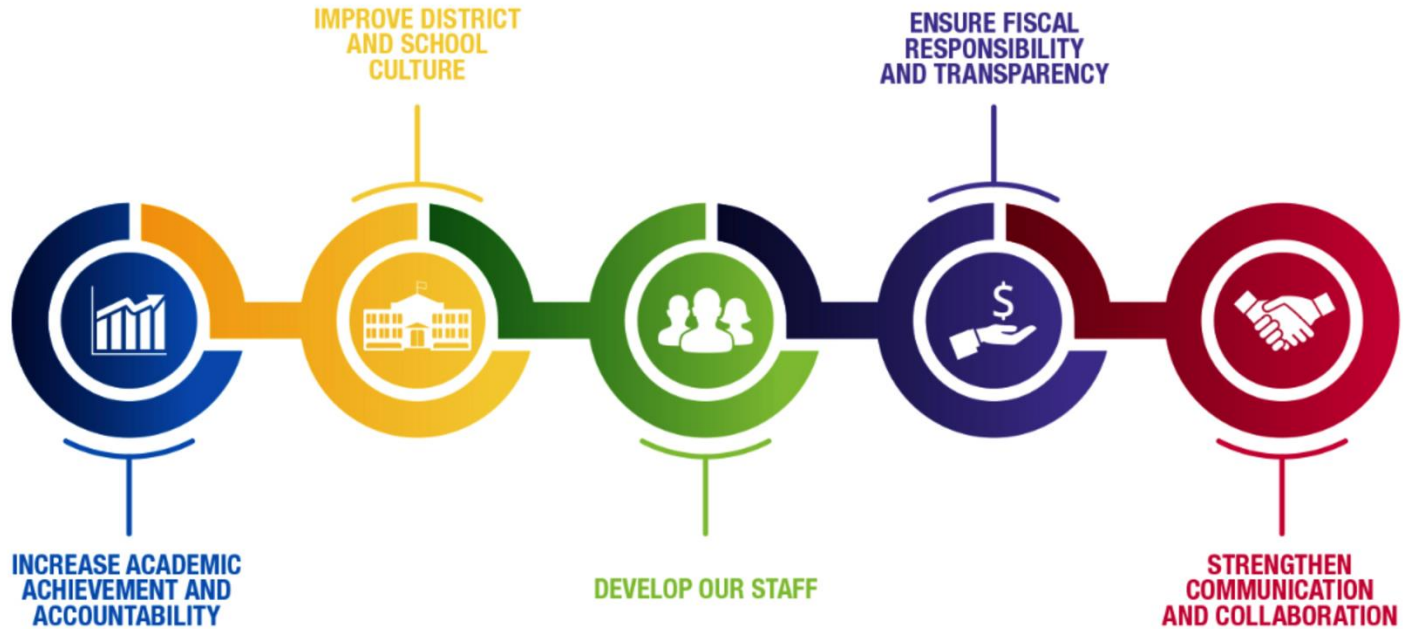
**MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# **FY26 Budget Proposal**

June 5, 2025

**Brenda Cassellius, Ed.D.**  
*Superintendent*

# *Five Priorities for Success*



# ***Strategic Plan Driving Our Mission***



## **Strategic Plan Driving Our Mission:**

MPS is a diverse district that welcomes all students and prepares them for success in higher education, post-education opportunities, work, and citizenship.

**“MPS must make systemic changes to ensure students – particularly the most vulnerable – are at the center of every decision.”**

*MPS Superintendent Brenda Cassellius, EdD*

# Investing in Foundational Change

**With this proposed budget, MPS will take an important step forward in restructuring the district to accelerate student learning, improve efficiency, and create new accountability and transparency.**

- Make literacy the central academic focus
- Address student attendance
- Strengthen engagement with families, community, partnerships
- Restructure Central Services and enhance recruitment
- Enhance school kitchens
- Invest in deferred maintenance to address lead issues and more



# Systemic Challenges

MPS continues to operate within the context of competing internal and external factors, including:

- **Rigid state revenue formulas**
- **Significant inflation**
- **Challenges of recruiting/retaining qualified staff during a national teacher shortage**

These financial constraints have led to a long-term financial structural imbalance.



# Focus Areas

Despite this financial situation, it is important to continue to invest in the district's facilities, operational capacity, and services that support student academic success.

Our focus areas include:

- 1 Improving academic outcomes**
- 2 Stabilizing the district amid declining enrollment**
- 3 Filling classroom educator vacancies**
- 4 Addressing our financial realities**

# Improving Academic Outcomes

In 2024, the percentage of grade 4 students in Milwaukee who performed at or above the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient level in Mathematics was **12%**.

This means 88% of grade 4 students are not proficient in math.

In 2022, 11% were proficient.

In 2009, 15% were proficient.





# Improving Academic Outcomes

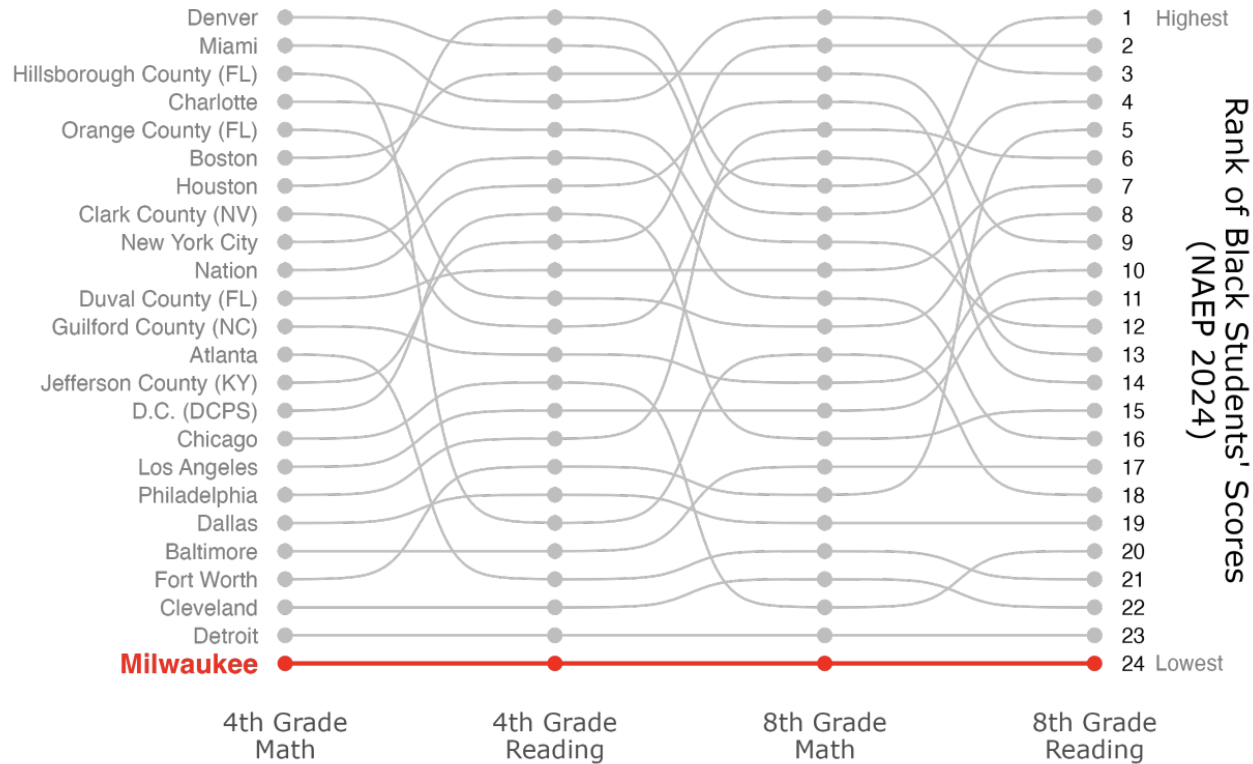
In 2024, the percentage of students in Milwaukee who performed at or above the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient level in reading was **9%**.

This means 91% of grade 4 students are not proficient in reading.

In 2022 and 2009, 12% of grade 4 students were proficient in reading.



# Milwaukee Ranks Last for Black Student Outcomes



# Enrollment Trends

## Historical Enrollment

**2024–25:** 65,924

**2023–24:** 66,591

**2022–23:** 67,026

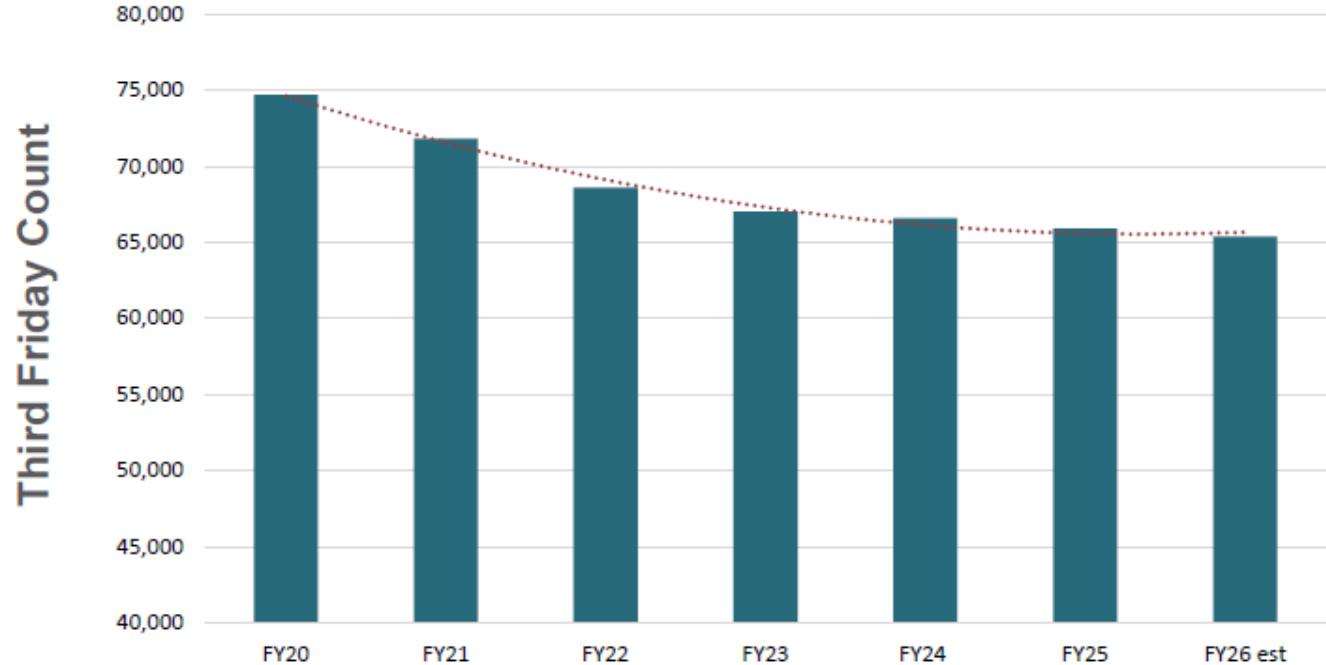
**2021–22:** 68,590

**2020–21:** 71,826

**2019–20:** 74,678

—

**2005–06:** 92,395



# MPS Vacancies

The district has approx.

**391 vacancies**, including:

- **143 classroom teaching positions**, which include **62 in special education**
- **134 paraprofessional vacancies**



# Attendance Rates

MPS must address the factors contributing to chronic absenteeism. Our students must be in school to learn.

Year to date as of May 23, 2025:

**84.1%**

**+0.7% (over 2024)**

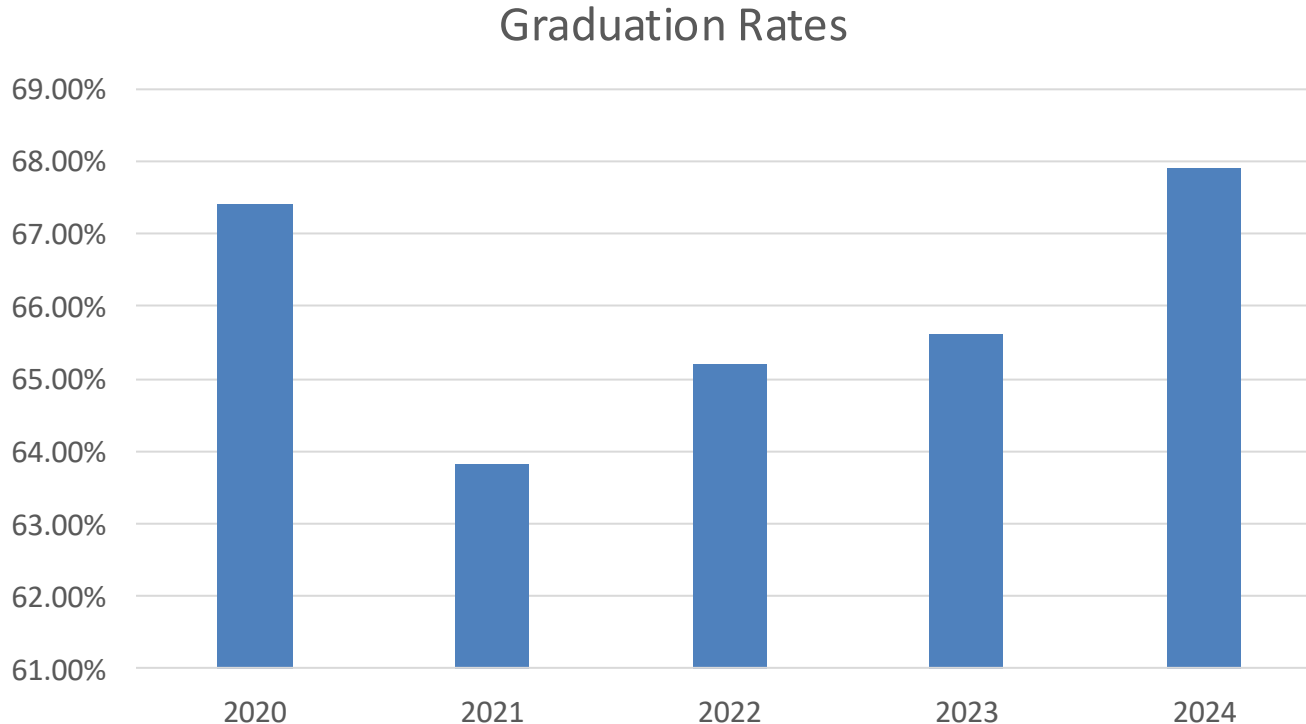
**Attendance Goal for Every Student:  
95% or Higher**

***What does 95%  
attendance mean?***

95% attendance =  
nearly 2 weeks missed  
over the course of a  
school year

# Graduation Rates

***Graduation rates have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels but are still in need of urgent attention.***





# MPS Crisis Response

*as of May 5, 2025*

Type of Death	Number
Medical	14
Accidental	3
Homicide	21
Suicide	3
<b>TOTAL (2024–25)</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Total 2023–24</i>	<i>48</i>

Of all these deaths, 20 were gun-related.

# MPS Staffing

The district employs more than 9,500 educators and staff to support educational services and ensure safe and welcoming schools for our students.

**The proposed budget includes a salary step increase for all position types, and a 2.95% cost-of-living adjustment to keep pace with inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index.**

The budget continues to prioritize direct educational services in classrooms, focusing on the district's Five Priorities for Success.



# Supporting ESL Students

The Proposed Budget bolsters support for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL):

- **10 ESL teachers** will be added
- Increased cost is **~\$1.2 million**
- Budgeted in the district's Newcomer Center
- Teachers will be deployed by Office of Academics based on ESL needs throughout the district



# Lead Stabilization

The district is working to address all areas of concern regarding lead paint identified in our schools.

- Contracting with certified renovators to expedite work and ensure compliance with Milwaukee Health Department directives
- Planning **~\$16 million in lead-related repairs**
- Complete first phase of work before school resumes
- Additional costs expected for the second phase of lead stabilization



# Operational Audit Findings

- Proficiency rates at 9% in Math and 12% in Reading
- Systemic failures to prioritize student outcomes
- 11.3% enrollment declines
- National and local teacher shortage
- 80% of students living in poverty
- Longstanding culture of fear and retaliation/reluctance to change
- Accountability measures missing
- Lack of honesty and transparency in financial management
- Ineffective communication – lack of public trust and confidence

# FY 26 PROPOSED BUDGET

**The FY26 Proposed Budget plans for \$1.549 billion of revenue and expenditure budgets, including more than 9,500 educators and staff supporting nearly 66,000 students.**

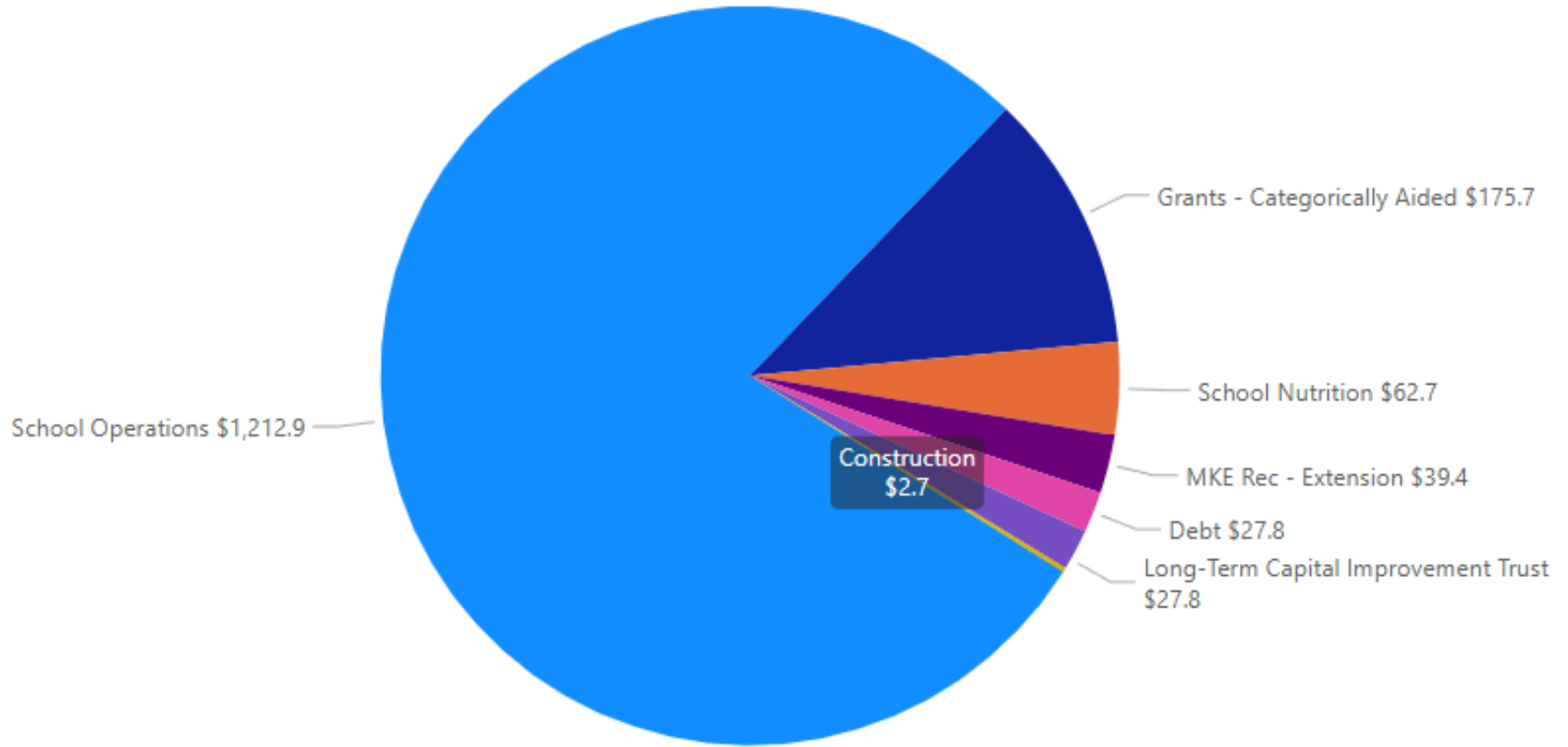
## FY 2026 Revenue and Expenditure

Object Type	2024 Actuals (\$M)	2025 FA FTE	2025 FA Budget (\$M)	2026 PB FTE	2026 PB Budget (\$M)	Difference FTE	Difference Budget (\$M)
Expenditure	\$1,744.5	9,587.0	\$1,487.3	9,598.3	\$1,549.0	11.3	\$61.7
Revenue	\$1,995.3	0.0	\$1,487.1	0.0	\$1,549.0	0.0	\$61.9



# FY26 Districtwide Revenue by Budget Fund Group

(millions)



# Revenues

The district receives revenues from:



- **State and federal governments**
- **Local property taxes**
- **Donors**
- **Community organizations**
- **Local business community**

Revenues are recorded and tracked for each fund.

Revenues are allocated by the state and federal governments per student to support their education:

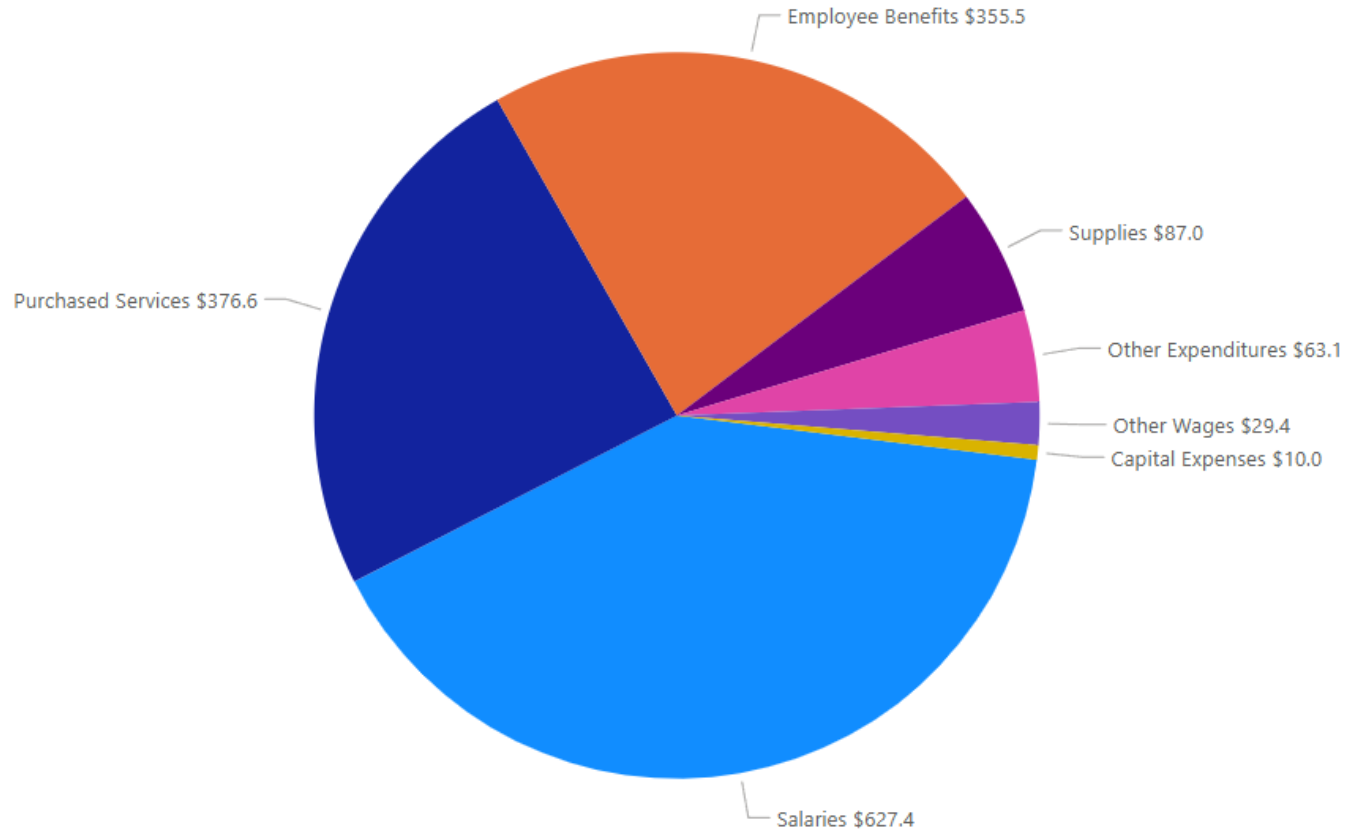
- **State Equalization Aid**
- **Per Pupil State Aid**
- **Federal Title funding**
- **State grants such as Achievement Gap Reduction funding**

# Referendum

- Milwaukee voters approved a recurring referendum in 2024, raising revenue limits and phasing in **\$140 million for the 2024–25** school year.
- This is set to phase in annually, to **\$252 million by the 2027–28** school year.



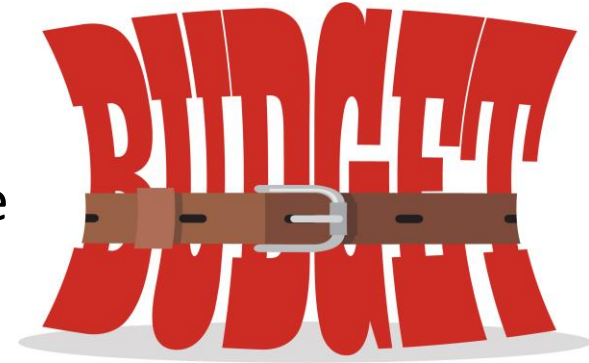
# FY26 Budget Expenditure Categories



# Decisive Action Needed

## Decisive action is needed to correct the district's financial situation

- Over the next two years, the district must increase revenues and reduce costs
- Administration is studying options to reduce the projected deficit and eliminate the practice of using a “vacancy adjustment” to anticipate savings and pre-budget those savings
- A proactive plan is required to consolidate schools, eliminate vacant positions, and create efficiencies
- A proactive plan will ensure we can invest in core academic services and critical student supports



# FY26 Investments

- The district is working urgently to stabilize lead paint in its schools, requiring an increased facilities investment of about **\$16 million** from the Long-Term Capital Improvement Trust.
- The district is creating eight Academic Superintendent positions to better support principals and schools. The increase of approximately **\$2.5 million**, including benefits, will be largely offset by eliminating the district's five Regional Superintendent positions.
- The district is creating four Managers of Operations. These positions will support principals with finance, staffing, and logistical operational needs. The approximate increase of **\$1 million**, including benefits, will be largely offset by eliminating Instructional Leader Directors positions.



# FY26 Investments

- A **\$13 million increase** is for funding passed through to private schools for the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP). The state's 2023 biennial budget increased the district's SNSP obligation; the district must increase this budget to pay for it.
- The 2025–26 Proposed Budget creates the **Office of Families, Communities, and Partnerships**. This will better support our families and create stronger partnerships with the local business community, MPS Foundation, collective bargaining units, and our families for the benefit of Milwaukee's children.
- A new **Department of Legal and Labor Relations** will support school leaders and allow the Office of Human Resources to focus on recruiting, training, and retaining caring, competent teachers in every classroom and support staff to help them succeed.

# FY26 Investments

- Additional staff will support **16 new classrooms of special education seats** for increasing numbers of students with special needs, especially at younger ages. This is 35 additional FTEs.
- A **\$3.25 million increase** for pupil transportation contracts adjusts to inflationary increases.
- A **\$3.5 million increase** for the district's Common School Fund will match the state's allocation for MPS. The fund previously was underbudgeted and spread across school and central budgets. In 2025–26, these funds will be placed in a central budget to ensure compliance with state guidelines.



# FY26 Investments

- An additional **\$2.8 million for the school operations** fund will enhance facilities work. This includes:
  - 20 additional building services helpers to ensure safe and welcoming school environments
  - Holiday pay for tradespeople, who in the past were not paid for MPS-recognized holidays
- A **\$2 million** investment in the district's new **Safe Schools Hub**
- A **\$2 million increase** accounts for occupational therapist salaries and other special education practitioners that were higher than anticipated in prior budgets. All salaries were paid correctly but were underprojected.



# FY26 Investments



An increase of **\$1.4 million** will fund special education apprentice teachers.



An increase of **\$1.2 million** will add 10 teachers of English as a second language (ESL).



An increase of **\$775,000** will fund the implementation of a state law requiring school resource officers in MPS schools.

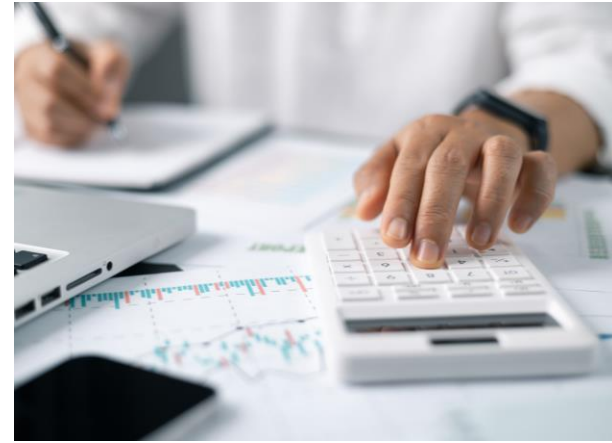
# FY26 Investments



**\$650,000** will pay for installing and improving salad bars in all high schools.



**\$400,000** will be used to start SURGE (Students Utilizing Resources for Growth and Excellence).



**\$350,000** will add four positions to the Office of Finance



# Looking Ahead

- Building foundational reading skills in students and intervening with at-risk students
- Central Services reorganization redirects resources to support classroom teaching and learning
- Increasing professional development of school leaders will better support teachers and students
- Mitigating lead paint hazards in older buildings and district's new Safe Schools Hub will enhance safety





# Looking Ahead

To live up to its potential, the district must be strategic about using its limited resources in the most efficient and effective way to maximize educational opportunities for our students.

**The 2025–26 Proposed Budget aims for immediate, strategic investments to implement transformative change toward:**

- **Improved academic achievement and attendance**
- **Safe and welcoming schools**
- **Efficient operations and a culture that will make MPS an employer of choice**



# Budget Timetable

## June 2

Proposed Budget delivered to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors

## June 5 and 12

Presentation of Proposed Budget  
(Public Comment Welcome)

## June 17

Statutory public hearing on Proposed Budget

## June 24

Board votes on Proposed Budget at regular meeting



**Email:** Written feedback is welcome! [budget25@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:budget25@milwaukee.k12.wi.us)



**MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Thank  
you!**