



# Tracking the States: Governors' Education Priorities vs. Legislative Outcomes

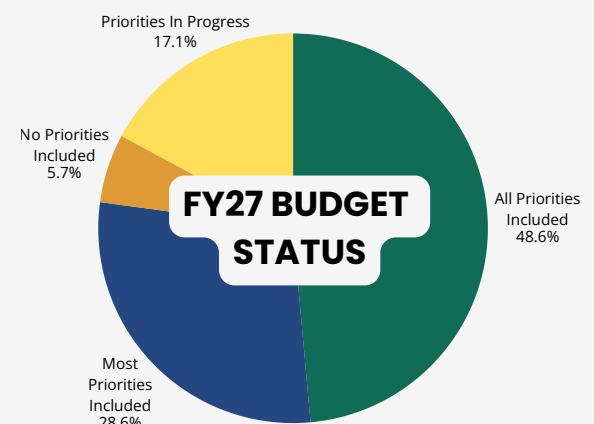
## OVERVIEW

State budgets reflect the priorities and shared responsibilities of a state's executive and legislative branches, with funding decisions shaping which laws and policies are carried out each fiscal year. Legislative sessions are in full swing in 35 states. Forty-six states begin their 2027 fiscal year on July 1, 2026, and as of late June, 25 states have signed their FY27 budgets into law, with an additional 5 awaiting their governor's signature. Eighteen states have biennial budgets, with 15 entering their second year and three passing new two-year budgets. Read on to learn more about FY27 education funding in comparison to governors' priorities.

## THE PROGRESS REPORT

In their annual State of the State addresses, 73% of governors promoted one or more new education priorities, including workforce alignment and CTE, school funding, teacher pay, school choice, and cell phone bans.

- **77% of analyzed gubernatorial budgets include most or all of their stated education priorities;** where priorities were excluded, it was mostly due to differing legislative majorities being in power.
- **Community Schools:** 3 state budgets include dedicated funding for Community Schools: Maryland, California, and New Mexico. Community Schools legislation has surfaced this session in California, Florida, Hawai'i, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Mexico.
- **Strongest themes:** efforts to fully fund the K-12 formula, further expansion of ESAs/school choice funding, free school meals, early-childhood investment, and workforce/CTE funding.





## Northeast

2026

Northeast priorities included workforce development & CTE, early childhood education, cellphone and social media restrictions, and school funding formula reform.

- ✓ **Maryland** Governor Wes Moore signed the FY27 budget on April 8th, 2026, which will deliver \$10.1B for K-12 Education, an increase of \$370M from FY26, and \$572M for the Concentration of Poverty Grant (funds Community Schools), an increase of 16% from FY26. Maryland's enacted budget invests an additional \$10.6M in the Department of Juvenile Services, bringing total funding to \$30M, to expand community-based programs for justice-involved and at-risk youth, including the Thrive Academy. The bipartisan budget also included a \$10.9M Academic Excellence Program for literacy and math coaches, and \$480.5M for school construction. These funding wins align with Governor Moore's FY27 priorities.
- ✓ **Delaware's** Governor signed the FY27 budget on June 30th. The bill will deliver more than \$2.5B for pre-K-12 education, and \$8M in early literacy funding. A new K-12 funding formula from the Public Education Funding Commission is due July 2026, with the earliest implementation in FY2028. This budget follows Governor Meyer's FY27 priorities.
- ✓ **Connecticut's** FY27 budget was signed on May 26th, with a historic \$193M increase in supplemental education grants for every district and municipality, plus \$12M for universal free breakfast, and \$5M for school mental-health supports. The budget also invests about \$300M in the Early Childhood Education Endowment and seeds new literacy coach and teacher apprentice programs. This budget follows Governor Lamont's FY27 priorities stated in his State of the State Address.
- ✓ **Vermont** Governor Scott signed [HB 955](#) in June 2026, accelerating voluntary district mergers, the transition to a new funding formula, and prioritizing the expansion of CTE access for middle and high schoolers. The appropriations bill adds \$14M to the teachers' retirement system, \$18M for healthcare benefits, and \$17M for education services. The bill's enactment signals a win for the Governor's education policy priorities and allows for [Act 73 from 2025](#) to move forward. Scott compromised with Vermont Democrats to employ voluntary district mergers instead of mandatory mergers as originally planned.

# Regional Findings

## Midwest

2026

Midwest priorities included workforce development & CTE, early childhood & childcare, cell phone & social media restrictions, and literacy & reading improvement.

- ✓ **Michigan's** Governor Whitmer signed the FY2027 budget into law on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026. This budget delivers on Whitmer's promise to invest in student literacy, with \$502M allocated for literacy curriculum, literacy training for teachers, before- and after-school programs, literacy coaches, high impact tutoring, and more. \$200M was allocated to continue free school meals, and the per-pupil funding increased by 2.5% to \$10,300 per pupil.
- II The **Ohio** budget is biennial, with the FY27 budget passed last year. Governor DeWine's statewide attendance dashboard was launched on April 15th, providing weekly public data on chronic absence, his top issue stated in his State of the State Address. HB304, a bill to double K-8 recess, is pending in committee, and the 13,000-student career-tech waitlist has yet to receive new funding. Debate on funding for this program is expected to continue ahead of FY28-FY29 negotiations.
- ✓ **Illinois** Governor Pritzker signed the \$55.9B FY27 budget on June 16th, 2026, adding \$350M to the Evidence-Based Funding formula to bring K-12 to \$9.2B and funding CTE at \$59.3M. In Pritzker's February State of the State Address, he discussed the harms social media has on youth and proposed the Social Media Platform Fee that would generate \$200M per year to support K-12 education. This priority manifested in the budget as the Social Media Platform Fee that starts January 1, 2027, charging social media companies between \$0.10-\$0.50 per user per month, dependent on number of platform users. The collected fees will be distributed to the Secretary of State Special Fund and the Common School Fund, supporting K-12 education costs. This budget largely delivers on Pritzker's FY27 priorities, with increases in funding for literacy and CTE opportunities.

# Regional Findings

TRACKING THE STATES  
2026

## South

2026

Southern priorities included workforce development & CTE, literacy & reading improvement, early childhood & childcare, and teacher pay & recruitment.

- ✓ **Tennessee's** legislature passed the FY27 budget in May 2026 and mostly delivered on Governor Lee's FY27 priorities. The bill appropriated approximately \$7.1B for the TISA K-12 formula, an increase of \$145.5M from FY26, \$339M to strengthen public schools, and \$155M to expand the Education Freedom Scholarship voucher program. Tennessee continued to invest in at-risk and justice-involved youth and workforce development, appropriating a nonrecurring \$20M for a summer youth employment program, \$4M for a state workforce board, and \$15M for Work-Centered Training Grants. The latter will provide nonrecurring grant funding to nonprofits in the Memphis community that deliver services supporting employment and economic stability for at-risk youth and justice-involved adults.
- ✓ **Kentucky's** Republican supermajority's FY27-28 biennial budget rejected Governor Beshear's main budget asks, which included \$159M for mandatory teacher raises and implementing universal Pre-K, as well as an additional \$560M for a teacher retirement deposit. The state's legislature did pass a 2% per-pupil SEEK increase, amounting to \$4,626 per student in FY27, and restored funding for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library partnership.
- ✓ **Louisiana's** FY27 budget was signed by Governor Landry on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026. This budget maintains the GATOR voucher program at level funding from FY26. HB 951, passed during the spring session, will launch the Office of the Louisiana Talent Accelerator within Louisiana Works to address workforce needs and fund the new office at \$31M. Landry's ask at his State of the State Address for an Office of Health and Nutrition will come to fruition in October 2026, thanks to the passage of SB219. These were all asks made by Governor Landry in his State of the State Address earlier this year.

# Regional Findings



## West

2026

Western priorities included workforce development & CTE, early childhood & childcare, school funding & federal funding protection, and literacy & reading improvement.

- ✓ **California** Governor Newsom signed the FY27 budget on June 29, 2026. This bill directs \$127B to schools and community colleges, including \$1B for Community Schools and \$2.4B to ongoing special education funding. It also adds \$4.7B for out-of-school time programming, \$700M for school kitchens, and a one-time \$300M boost for CTE. This budget follows most of Newsom's priorities, with several in the works like the control of the California Department of Education from the state superintendent of public instruction to a new education commissioner.
- ✓ **Colorado's** Gov. Polis signed the FY26-27 biennial budget in May 2026, increasing the state share of district program funding by \$206.7M and raising per-student funding by \$209. The budget increased Universal Preschool funding by \$14M while maintaining CTE funding at roughly \$32.7M. This budget follows most of Governor Polis' education priorities for FY27.
- ✓ The **New Mexico** FY27 budget was passed on March 11th and is largely operational, cementing the nation's first universal free childcare, funded at \$463M per year, and allocating \$35M for CTE and \$29M for reading and math supports. Community Schools were appropriated \$18.3M through the Public Education Reform Fund (PERF) pilot, and a new Office of Special Education has been established. This budget follows Governor Grisham's education priorities for FY27.
- II **Washington's** legislature, on March 12th, approved a new income tax on homes with annual incomes over \$1M with the purpose of increasing revenue for state funding of K-12 Education. The new income tax largely follows the governor's priorities; however, the commitment to K-12 is nonbinding. FY26 also saw the passage of the 2026 supplemental operating budget and ESSB 6260, which will implement several cuts to K-12 funding totaling roughly \$90M. Additionally, Governor Ferguson signed the "Washington Completes FAFSA" executive order, which is designed to elevate youth voice.

# Takeaways

TRACKING THE STATES  
2026

## EDU BILLS TO TRACK:

- **Delaware's K-12 funding formula:** Delaware's Public Education Funding Commission recommendations are due July 2026, with implementation possible in FY2028.
- **Vermont HB 955 (Act 73 implementation):** Signed on June 18th, HB 955 accelerates district mergers and the shift to a new funding formula; one to watch.
- **Washington's Maire Tax and Illinois' Social Media Tax:** New taxes on Maires and social media platforms earmarked to support K-12 could become a template for increasing annual funds for K-12 education.

## PRIORITY VS. OUTCOME:

- **Missouri:** The FY27 budget was passed on May 7th and is awaiting the governor's signature. This budget left the K-12 foundation formula roughly \$190M shy of full funding, the first time since 2017 Republicans declined full funding, while the MOScholars voucher program gained +\$10M.
- **Arizona:** Governor Hobbs was unable to secure guardrails for the \$1B universal school voucher program, which has drawn controversy amid reports of parents misusing funds. There will also be no renewals for \$1.5M for dual enrollment programs, \$16M for the Arizona Promise Program, and \$2M for the Adult Education Workforce Program. However, the budget does include funding for free school lunches and \$37M for low-income school funding.

## IN CONCLUSION:

- **Most governors received a majority of what they asked for:** Roughly 77% of analyzed budgets reflected the governor's education priorities, with full or near-full delivery clustered in states where the governor's party controls the legislature.
- **School choice continues to expand:** In red and purple states, funding for school choice programs outpaces formula funding for public schools.
- **Community schools:** There remains a narrow but deepening commitment. Maryland, California, and New Mexico funded Community Schools directly, with investments of \$572M, \$1B, and \$18.3M, respectively.
- **Bipartisan Themes:** Free school meals, early childhood, CTE/Workforce, and literacy.
- **Several budgets are still live ahead of the July 1 deadline:** As of late June, several states were unsigned, pending, in conference, or in framework form, with most facing a June 30th or July 1st fiscal-year start.