



Since its passage last year, the Evidence-Based Funding Model has provided an additional \$650 million for public schools—no small feat given the backlog of unpaid bills in Illinois.

But how are individual school districts using new tier funds to improve student outcomes?

To find out, IASA is speaking with school superintendents across the state to learn what each is doing with the funding. What was clear from the conversations is that superintendents know how to stretch a dollar.

So here's a closer look at how districts across Illinois are using EBM funds to improve student learning.

Zion ESD #6

Enrollment: 2594

Type: preK-8

FY18: \$1.9 million

FY19: \$1.3 million

Thanks to EBF, kindergarten classroom sizes have dropped from more than 30 students to between 11 and 17 students per classroom, Zion ESD #6 Superintendent Dr. Keely Roberts said.

Zion accomplished that by hiring 10 additional classroom teachers, allowing the district to create a new section of kindergarten and first grade in each building.

"This is absolutely a dream come true," Roberts said. "There is zero chance that would ever happen without EBF money." Reducing classroom sizes is one of three major initiatives in Zion.

Roberts said the district also hired 12 new interventionists, who are certified teachers, to provide classroom support to teachers in the classroom, with a mix of EBF and Title I dollars. The new hires will provide direct instruction for children and work with teachers to analyze student- performance data. "We don't want to wait for children to fail," she said. "We felt the right thing to do was to get as much student contact with classroom teachers for our youngest learners."

Improving social and emotional supports for children is also a priority, Roberts added. The district created an elementary supervisory aide, a non-traditional role in the school that will focus on relationship building with students and families. The person will serve as a conduit to classroom teachers, as well as oversee responsibilities such as supervising lunch and recess.

"Part of what makes a successful school is having deep relationships with children and their families," Roberts said.

Harvard CUSD #50

Enrollment: 2,700

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$2.2 million

FY19: \$1.9 million

Harvard CUSD #50 has used new state funding to expand educational opportunities for students, offer more social and emotional supports and improve college readiness.

When the Illinois State Board of Education calculated adequacy scores for each district, Harvard CUSD #50 had a score of 50 percent, making it tied for the third lowest in the state.

"(Evidence-Based Funding) has provided a ray of hope for our district," said Superintendent Dr. Corey Tafoya. "It's no longer a matter of wishing we could do that. We can actually do things now, and it's had an immediate impact on our kids."

Harvard went from a volunteer art teacher to three full-time art teachers-an addition that Tafoya said will have a drastic impact.

Harvard has also hired two social workers, a dean of students at the junior high, an elementary counselor and a discipline consultant. The moves significantly improve social and emotional supports in place for students—two-thirds of whom come from low-income families, Tafoya said.

The district has also been able to afford more professional development for teachers to help move along the district's literacy initiative for K-5 students.

Another major initiative with EBF, Tafoya added, is to boost college readiness. The district purchased the SAT Suite of Assessments and now tests students in eighth, ninth and 10th grades, which provides measurable data the district can use to track student growth and develop support strategies.

"We are able now to identify student weaknesses and provide individualized supports to address student deficiencies," Tafoya said.

Rockford Public Schools #205

Enrollment: 26,040

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$8.3 million

FY19: \$8.9 million

The infusion of EBM dollars is supporting major changes at the elementary and pre-K level, as well as preserving Rockford's College and Career Academy, Superintendent Dr. Ehren Jarrett said.

Last year, the district piloted what it calls "innovation zones" to help improve student achievement at elementary schools.

The idea, developed in conjunction with the teacher's union, will lengthen the elementary day by 45 minutes in exchange for additional dollars to be used to meet additional building level staffing needs.

The EBM will also allow Rockford to sustain an early childhood investment that includes an FY19 investment of over \$2 million in local funds. The expansion has allowed a significant increase in all day early childhood seats.

"We see early childhood as a long-term intervention that is a good use of the funds," Jarrett said. "We can really sustain a program like this because of EBM."

Rockford is also using the dollars to hire additional kindergarten teachers to keep classroom sizes at 20 students or below, Jarrett said, as well as add assistant principals at the elementary level. The extra administration in the building will free up principals from things like cafeteria and recess supervision and allow them to dedicate more time to increase instructional support and leadership.

At the high school level, Jarrett added, EBM helps support its academy, which provides students with real world experiences with local businesses, among other things.

“EBM is really giving Rockford students the chance to have the same opportunities as wealthier districts,” he said.

Chicago Ridge SD #127.5

Enrollment: 1,473

Type: PreK-8

FY18: \$1.2 million

FY19: \$923,372

With its EBF dollars, Chicago Ridge is taking a multi-faceted approach to improve learning opportunities for students and offer more social and emotional supports, superintendent Dr. Kevin Russell said.

The district hired full time art and music teachers, making it so students could take the courses year-round. In previous years, Russell said, the teachers would flip flop buildings. Physical education was also expanded to four days a week, rather than three, thanks to EBF, Russell said. As a result of the additional staff, the elementary district daily master schedule could be rewritten to incorporate more time for teacher collaboration, Russell added.

The changes at Chicago Ridge didn't stop there. Russell said the district added three new, state-of-the-art STEM labs, complete with smart boards, a 3-D printer, robotics and computers for students to learn coding.

"Before EBF that was almost unthinkable in our school district," he said. "The data showed we needed to expand in those areas for our kids to be successful."

Two social workers also came on board, allowing the district to provide more support and trauma services for students. The additional money also was used to hire assistant principals at each of the three buildings, freeing up building

principals from lunchroom supervision and other similar duties. "We've been busy," Russell said about using EBF money. "It really has leveled the playing field for us."

Prairie Hills ESD #144

Enrollment: 2,549

Type: preK–8

FY18: \$1.2 million

FY19: \$1.3 million

EBM dollars are allowing students at Prairie Hills to be exposed to new academic and enrichment opportunities that weren't previously available, Superintendent Dr. Kimako Patterson said.

What she and her staff have found is that the normal school day simply isn't long enough to fully support the student body, which is 95 percent low income. The dollars, Patterson said, will essentially allow the district to expand the school day and week for students who need it.

During the week, the district will offer students an after- school STEM program, where students will learn skills such as robotics and coding. There will be an emphasis on encouraging girls to participate, Patterson added.

And on Saturday, the district is using EBM to create an academy, where teachers are available to tutor and help students. EBM will be used to pay teachers a stipend for the extra work.

"Our students will become much more acclimated to science, technology, engineering and math because of EBM," Patterson said.

In addition, new tier funds fulfill a dream of hers, Patterson said, by expanding foreign language opportunities to include French at the junior high. Students at Prairie Hills were only offered Spanish previously.

"It's always been important to me to expose minority students to foreign language," she said. "It gets them ready to be able to continue French once they enter high school."

Any remaining dollars will be used to help balance the budget.

West Chicago ESD #33

Enrollment: 4,328

Type: preK-8

FY18: \$2.7 million

FY19: \$1.9 million

Sandwiched between Naperville and Elgin, West Chicago ESD #33 has the lowest equalized assessed value in DuPage County.

As a result, the district's superintendent, Dr. Charles W. Johns, said it has been stretched financially for decades. However, EBF is helping to turn that around with an infusion of new state dollars.

But the largest need was an unexpected expense, Johns said. West Chicago lost nearly \$500,000 in early childhood funding when the Illinois State Board of Education altered its distribution model. EBF salvaged the program, which is both center- and home-based and supports 625 students.

"We're having to use EBF to make up that shortfall," Johns said.

Remaining EBF dollars will support improved after-school and summer programming, as well as allow the district to hire more family liaisons and social workers.

West Chicago receives federal dollars for its after-school program, but it needed financial help to offer transportation to all students. Meanwhile, the district's summer-school program is being revamped to focus more on STEM-based activities, Johns said.

"We want children to be more attached to school and have more of an affiliation to school," he said. "Students who struggle academically need to find something that brings them joy about school, which we believe will then cross over into academic learning."

Aurora West USD #129

Enrollment: 11,746

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$5.9 million

FY19: \$4.5 million

EBM dollars are helping keep classroom sizes down and students in their neighborhood elementary school in West Aurora, assistant superintendent Dr. Brent Raby said.

West Aurora has 10 elementary schools spread throughout the community. Students who register on time attend their neighborhood school, but those who register late may have to be shifted to another building because classroom sizes are capped and there is no room.

However, that system had some flexibility this school year because West Aurora had the ability to hire additional teachers to prevent overflow.

“This year we’re able to hold off on making those decisions because we’ll know we will have room and the full-time staff to keep class numbers down and try to avoid overflow situations,” Raby said.

In addition, EBM is allowing West Aurora to shift to a double block math structure at the middle school. Students will now be placed in the level of math they’re comfortable with, rather than just sixth graders taking sixth grade math or seventh grade math in seventh grade, for example.

“That is huge for us,” Raby said. “We know one of the biggest challenges is students having to play catch up when they enter high school. This structure is going to let us head that off.”

EBM is also allowing West Aurora to hire staff to support its new career center, Raby said, which will be focused on creating pathways for students interested in technology, manufacturing and the medical field.

“We want students to be able to walk out of high school with certifications that can get them into entry-level careers,” Raby said. “EBM dollars are going to be used to support that effort.”

East Moline SD #37

Enrollment: 2,591

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$1.3 million

FY19: \$928,979

For the first time in years, East Moline Superintendent Dr. Kristin Humphries said the district isn't in cost-cutting mode.

Like many districts, Humphries said, pro-ration in state funding has been devastating—some years losing over \$1 million in general state aid. However, the passage of EBM helped stabilize the budget, and the district can now look to bring back and expand opportunities for kids.

The top priority with the EBM funds, Humphries said, is additional reading supports in the elementary schools. East Moline is a diverse district, where almost 40 languages are spoken. With the new dollars in FY18, East Moline hired an instructional reading coach and reading aides to do direct intervention work with kids struggling to read.

“We knew we needed additional supports for kids,” Humphries said. For FY19, East Moline is looking to provide more support in math with the addition of an instructional coach at the middle school. The EBM funds have also been used to hire two additional social workers and a music teacher, he said.

“It's a feeling that is unexplainable,” Humphries said about how budgeting is different under EBM. “The quality of a child's education is less dependent on their zip code.”

Kankakee SD#111

Enrollment: 4,662

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$2 million

FY19: \$1.3 million

Two years ago, Kankakee closed a school, cut central office administrators and combined positions in an effort to balance the budget. The cuts narrowed the gap but didn't quite close it.

The next step likely would have been reducing the number of social workers—a move nobody wanted to make. However, new dollars from EBM alleviated that concern, Kankakee Superintendent Dr. Genevra Walters said.

“Our students have significant social and emotional needs,” she said. “It would have been a challenge to support their needs and for them to have success in academics.”

In FY19, Walters said, Kankakee is using EBM dollars to proceed with major initiatives that would have been hard to implement fully without funding. The district is redesigning its educational model to develop a “cradle to career system,” Walters said. Part of that is a competency-based educational model, beginning this year with freshman and eventually expanding to the entire high school.

In addition, EBM is putting more technology in the hands of students. Beginning this school year, the district will be 1:1 with computers. A new junior ROTC program will also be supported with EBM dollars, Walters said.

“This has been a vision and plan of restructure and redesign the last four years that we have really struggled with without the funding,” she said. “With the additional money, we haven’t had to slow down.”

Streator Township HSD #40

Enrollment: 879

Type: 9–12

FY18: \$650,611

FY19: \$420,122

Launching a new STEM program was supposed to be a three-year plan, but EBM jumpstarted the process, Superintendent Matt Seaton said.

The district is investing the dollars into a new STEM lab and employing math and science teachers to design and oversee the project.

“They’re going to develop the classroom design as they go through this year,” Seaton said. “We feel like it’s a teacher’s dream.”

The new lab will be equipped with robotic equipment, computers, flexible furniture and 21st century work stations, among other things. But even more than the state-of-the-art space, Seaton said, the new program will provide students with job skills needed for a new labor market.

Streator is primarily a blue-collar community that sends as many students into the trades and vocational programs as it does to four-year universities.

“This was the next step for our math and science program,” Seaton said. “We’re providing exposure to students in advanced areas of science and math that interest them.”

The goal of the STEM program eventually is to make it student-led, Seaton said, adding the “sky is the limit” on the potential once students see what their predecessors did and build from there.

“We were waiting financially for retirements or an opportunity to adjust staff,” Seaton said on the district’s plan to design a STEM lab. “But with EBM coming in, it gave us enough cash on hand to go ahead and do it.”

Galesburg CUSD #205

Enrollment: 4,200

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$1.3 million

FY19: \$943,076

New state dollars are allowing the district to reduce the size of elementary classrooms, add instructional coaches and take steps to address the teacher shortage, Galesburg CUSD #205 Superintendent Dr. John Asplund said.

According to Asplund, classroom sizes in Galesburg were sometimes as high as 27 students per room. Thanks to an influx of new state dollars, the district is ramping down classroom sizes to a maximum of 25 students.

Another major plan to boost student performance is adding 10 instructional coaches to work one-on-one with students, Asplund said. The district is currently in the hiring process. A fine arts teacher was also recently hired thanks to EBF, he added.

"We went through \$4 million in cuts and are using the Evidence-Based Funding Model as a template to how we can bring staff back," Asplund said.

The teacher shortage remains a major concern in Galesburg. One way the district is combatting that, Asplund said, is to offer loan forgiveness to new teachers. Paraprofessionals and nurses, both positions that have been a struggle to fill, are also started out at a higher rate of pay, he added.

"The biggest thing EBF has done is given us the ability to stop cutting," Asplund said. "We're now able to put money back into buildings and focus assistance toward the neediest students."

CUSD #4

Enrollment: 657

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$58,652

FY19: \$44,931

As is the case in most rural districts, CUSD #4 Superintendent Scott Riddle said the district relies heavily on the community to help support the educational and extracurricular opportunities for students.

When the state pro-rated general state aid, the district saw a reduction in staff and programming and was forced to close two elementary schools and consolidate into one elementary and one middle school/high school building, causing overcrowding and large class sizes.

To cope, Riddle said, the district rented space from a local church for its early childhood program and one section of kindergarten. Because of EBF, Riddle said, the narrative has changed. CUSD #4 has hired additional staff at the early primary grades to help reduce class size, as well as add a part-time social worker to work with the social emotional needs of our students. In addition, EBF has allowed the district to update its digital math curriculum for K-12, Riddle said.

"Even though our EBF was minimal compared to many districts, the additional funds were stretched as far as possible to give the greatest impact for our students," Riddle said. "This approach has been the norm for most districts for the past decade. It is just nice to have a little more funds to stretch."

Pikeland CUSD#10

Enrollment: 1,186

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$335,701

FY19: \$178,761

For the first time in about five years, Paula Hawley, Pikeland's superintendent, said she will have close to a balanced budget and can look at hiring staff.

Pro-ration from the state put the western Illinois school district in a big hole that has been difficult to climb out of. With the FY19 EBM funds, Hawley said, the district plans to hire a full-time guidance counselor and part-time nurse.

The additional counselor will put someone in each building, freeing up counselors to work with students more on academics and college preparation. It also provides another person to help students with social and emotional needs—an area staff, parents and community members gave feedback on as a priority because Pikeland is a rural community that has few mental health resources.

“Schools have changed so much in the past 10 years with the social-emotional piece,” Hawley said. “You have to have the social-emotional part first. If those needs are not met there is no chance at academics.”

Hawley added she is excited to hire a part-time nurse to be in lock step with the ratio of nurses to students the EBM formula suggests. The plan was also to add a kindergarten teacher to help reduce class size, but the district couldn’t find a qualified candidate.

“If the EBM formula continues to be funded at appropriate levels, it will have a tremendous impact on what we can do,” Hawley said. “We’re starting to get our kids on a level playing field.”

Springfield SD #186

Enrollment: 14,295

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$1.1 million

FY19: \$887,768

Updating textbooks, especially in the area of science, was one of several ways the Springfield School District is using Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) dollars to improve student achievement, according to Superintendent Jennifer Gill.

The district purchased new textbooks, which include both a hard copy and digital resources, to implement a new science curriculum at the district's middle school (grades 6-8). The district's three high schools also received new textbooks in multiple science courses.

"These textbooks will automatically align us to the Next Generation Science Standards," Gill said. "It will make teaching more fluid and hopefully impact our learning."

In addition, the new state dollars helped the district update textbooks for Advanced Placement courses, which, like the science books, were outdated, Gill said.

Social and emotional learning was also a priority with EBF dollars, Gill added. Springfield has hired five Braided Behavioral Support Coaches to provide support in elementary classrooms.

"We really want this position to integrate work in the classroom with social and emotional learning standards," she said.

Lastly, EBF is helping Springfield maintain classroom sizes and stave off additional cuts to staff or programs.

"EBF has had an immediate impact," Gill said. "Purchasing a new curriculum was a large expense, and it allowed us to move quickly and provide professional development to support teachers."

Nokomis CUSD #22

Enrollment: 563

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$159,741

FY19: \$105,717

When he was hired as superintendent in 2010, Scott Doerr had to cut about \$450,000 to balance the budget.

Since then, the district operated on modest budgets that didn't feature much wiggle room for additional spending. Now with the EBM, Doerr said, he is able to bring back important positions he had to cut and expand services for kids.

Nokomis added an elementary guidance counselor and teacher, the latter to keep class sizes down. Doerr noted the money will help the district purchase new textbooks for the elementary school, as well as science and social studies books at the high school—something that is long overdue. More Google Chromebooks are also being acquired, speeding up the district's efforts to be 1:1 from third to 12th grade.

Perhaps most exciting, Doerr noted, is how the funds will provide materials and professional development opportunities for Nokomis' new high school advocacy class. During the 30-minute class, students set the agenda on what they want to focus on, including figuring out a career, job shadowing or just using the time to catch up on homework or study for a test.

The class will be available to freshmen and sophomores this year and will be expanded throughout the high school in the future, Doerr said.

“The EBM is allowing us to think outside the box and bring back services and new opportunities to kids,” Doerr said.

Staunton CUSD #6

Enrollment: 1,322

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$418,070

FY19: \$352,485

While the Evidenced-Based Funding Model was nearing passage in the General Assembly, Staunton Superintendent Dan Cox said the district decided right away it would put the new dollars to good use.

One year later, the district has used EBF to hire an interventionist at the junior high to help students who need the most help with language arts and math.

Another major initiative, Cox said, was to reduce class sizes. The district hired an elementary teacher, with the goal of getting all class sizes below 30. “We’re pushing our dollars to students most in need first,” he said.

In addition, Cox said, the district wanted to improve culture and climate in the district, so it hired a part-time counselor. The district made that decision because it shared a counselor with a neighboring district previously.

Technology in the district is also improving as a result of EBF. The one-to-one Chromebooks initiative in fifth through ninth grades has been piloted, he said.

But because of years of pro-ration from the state, Cox added, EBF dollars were also needed to help balance the budget. “Right out of the gate it has had an immediate impact on teaching and learning for kids,” Cox said. “We’re also digging out of a hole and having discussions about what we do and what we offer that benefit our students and kids. That has been the most inspiring.”

Belleville TWP HSD #201

Enrollment: 4,696

Type: 9-12

FY18: \$2.4 million

FY19: \$2.3 million

All plans on how to utilize EBF dollars are focused around students, superintendent Jeff Dosier said. The district is using EBF to maintain class sizes and update its instructional materials for students, which were outdated.

Increasing social and emotional supports for students is also a priority, Dosier added. The district is in the process of providing additional mental health resources for students.

Other ways the district is using EBF includes adding two more sections of AVID at each high school. AVID helps students with average grades develop higher-level thinking skills and become better organized.

Dollars have also been used to revitalize the district's agriculture program and increased offerings for students interested in pursuing a career in the medical field, Dosier said.

"We always had big plans and dreams of what it would be like to offer more, and the evidence-based funding allows us to say how are we going to do that in the most effective way to reach the most students efficiently and powerfully," he said.

But because of years of pro-ration from the state, Dosier added, some of the dollars were needed to help balance the budget. "It gives us breathing room, and we don't stress as much," he said.

Duquoin CUSD #300

Enrollment: 1,425

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$675,707

FY19: \$538,090

The Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) Model is helping reduce class sizes, provide more academic support for students, bolster the district's gifted program and provide resources for a greater infusion of technology in the classroom, DuQuoin CUSD #300 Superintendent Dr. Gary Kelly said.

Three teachers, one at each school, have been hired with EBF—a move that was done in conjunction with each school's leadership team. One of the teachers will serve more as an interventionist to help support students at the middle school.

"We're trying to address each school level," Kelly said. "The wise use of resources is more important than just receiving the dollars."

The district's gifted program will also be enhanced with the addition of a new, targeted curriculum. The previous curriculum was fragmented and having new resources will also allow us to expand this program, Kelly said.

"We're letting our plan be established at each school level," he said. "The resources are definitely addressing student learning needs."

Lastly, Kelly said, EBF-as long as it continues to be funded-will help with both short-term and long-term planning, something that has been elusive for years because of uncertainty in funding at the state level.

"We're going to continue to enhance programs, improve student learning opportunities and address individual student needs with the anticipation the new formula continues to be properly funded," Kelly said.

Vienna HSD #13.3

Enrollment: 380

Type: 9–12

FY18: \$235,948

FY19: \$225,085

The old funding formula created an extreme burden on Vienna High School that caused the district to cut and reduce programs and offerings, as well as delay capital maintenance projects, Superintendent Joshua Stafford said. Vienna High School actually ranked as the third least adequately funded district in the state.

With the release of the second year of EBM dollars, Stafford said, the district is enhancing programs and catching up on capital maintenance to provide a better learning environment for students.

Vienna High School has restored a full-time chemistry/ physics position to its science department, as well as a full-time principal. In addition, the high school has added another part-time foreign language teacher.

Vocational offerings are also being expanded, thanks to a partnership with the local community college that allows students to participate in a construction trade

program. Furthermore, Stafford noted, Vienna High School has replaced outdated and worn textbooks.

“Many of these initial steps have been intentionally aimed at reducing class sizes, which were trending at over 30 students,” Stafford said. “As we move forward, our primary focus will be on enhancing instruction and addressing support services for students.”

Beyond impacting areas related directly to student instruction, Stafford said, EBM dollars were used to replace an HVAC system. Moving forward, the district is eyeing other essential capital projects, such as the replacement of a leaky roof.

Cairo USD #1

Enrollment: 343

Type: preK–12

FY18: \$54,262

FY19: \$28,800

Cairo is in a situation like no other across the state.

Over the past 14 months, it has lost about 27 percent of its student body due to the forced relocation of people living in two public housing complexes that were infested and crumbling.

Dr. Andrea Evers, Cairo’s superintendent, said enrollment has dipped below 400 students, down from around 550 before relocation.

In a period of massive instability, Evers said, the evidence-based funding has helped the district endure and provided a “shot in the arm.” The district is using the new-tier funds to help keep early primary classrooms small, retain positions and add new ones, she said.

Cairo has hired a full-time speech language pathologist, as well as a retired teacher at the high school to provide additional math and social science electives to students.

The additional money also preserved a counselor position and allowed the district to avoid sending out reduction-in-force notices to teachers and teacher aides. Cairo is also in a unique situation because 100 percent of its population is considered low-income, which means about 20 percent of its budget is comprised

of federal funds. The district relies heavily on those dollars to hire para-professionals. Roughly 70 percent of classrooms have an aide, Evers said.

When the district has a better idea of what enrollment will be, EBM dollars could be used in a variety of ways moving forward, she said, including adding more art and vocational opportunities for students or hiring staff to keep classroom sizes small.

“We want our kids to have rich, encompassing and cutting-edge opportunities like other districts in the state,” Evers said. “Our kids deserve that access. The EBM is going to finally help make that access available to them.”

Carmi-White County CUSD #5

Enrollment: 1,393

Type: pre-K-12

FY18: \$345,752

FY19: \$193,530

Carmi-White County CUSD #5 lost \$2.3 million in general state aid from FY12 to FY16, resulting in staff being reduced and one building was closed.

Superintendent Brad Lee said 19 support staff, 16 teachers and three administrators were either not replaced after retiring or not rehired due to reduction-in-force. Plus, \$2.2 million was cut from the education fund over a four-year period.

“Class sizes had risen to as high as 29 in some elementary classes and our vocational department took a huge hit at the high school,” Lee said. “I cannot say enough about our faculty and staff. During these difficult times they took a soft freeze for three years and a hard freeze for two years. Yet, they still did an amazing job of providing the best education possible for our students.”

The new Evidenced-Based Funding (EBF) has allowed the district to hire three additional elementary teachers, a part-time special education teacher/part-time special education coordinator, an additional social worker, as well as pay for a new science curriculum for the district, Lee said.

“We were not just a sinking ship; we had sunk to the bottom,” Lee said. “Due to many difficult decisions by our board of education and the passing of the Evidence-Based Funding Model, we have resurfaced stronger than ever.”

Moving forward, Lee said, wants to hire additional vocational teachers and continue adding back staff, both certified and non-certified, to enhance programs and improve student learning opportunities.

Reaching that point, he cautioned, will be contingent on legislators and the governor properly funding the EBF model.

Hamilton County CUSD #10

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 1,230

FY 18: \$428,465

FY 19: \$238,673

Evidence-Based Funding has helped Hamilton County CUSD #10 stabilize after years of pro-ration in general state aid, superintendent Jeff Fetcho said.

The district used the infusion of new state dollars to bring back positions that were cut, balance the budget and maintain classroom sizes. New hires include a classroom aide at the elementary level, three paraprofessionals to support special education programs, a vocational teacher at the high school, school resource officer and a building principal.

The principal was added to have an administrator at each of the district's four buildings.

"We've always put an emphasis on where the achievement gap is occurring and tried to put interventions in place to help students most in need," Fetcho said.

Hamilton County CUSD is also updating its K-3 reading curriculum and 5-8 science curriculum with EBF. The latter is now aligned to Illinois' new science standards. Enhanced classroom resources for science classrooms, such as virtual reality goggles and 3-D printers, have also been purchased with the dollars.

Lastly, Fetcho noted, the stability EBF brings will help the district maintain classroom sizes below 15 students per classroom at the kindergarten level and renew its NWEA Map Assessment contract.

"It used to be very hard to do any long-term planning," Fetcho said. "We're very pleased with the new EBF structure and what it means for the students in our district."

Freeport SD #145

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 3,957

FY 18: \$1.07 million

FY 19: \$1.16 million

Academic growth for all students and social-emotional development are target goals Freeport SD #145 has identified with its Evidence-Based Funding dollars, superintendent Dr. Michael Schiffman said.

On the academic end, Schiffman said, EBF has made it possible for the district to undergo a major realignment at the middle school level. Instead of two middle schools housing fifth through eighth graders, the district now has a 5-6 building and 7-8 building.

Doing so required hiring eight additional teachers – a cost the district never would have been able to support without EBF.

“We really think we’re going to see good gains both academically and socially and emotionally under this model,” Schiffman said.

Other ways EBF is helping Freeport is technology, a new curriculum and more professional development opportunities for teachers. The high school is undergoing a one-to-one initiative with Google Chromebooks.

The new curriculum, Schiffman added, is more viable for students and aligned to Common Core and Illinois Next Generation Science standards. It also features both digital and traditional resources.

“We’re trying to prepare our students for that next step, whether it’s college or career,” he said. “We know technology is an important piece and a tool for that next step.”

For social-emotional supports, the district added social workers, making it so each of the district’s 12 buildings is staffed. EBF dollars also allowed the district to hire Behavior Support Personnel, a Family Resource Coordinator and properly fund its PBIS program.

“We continue to see the need for preparing kids socially and emotionally, so they continue to have a growth mindset,” Schiffman said. “It really goes back to taking care of our kids and meeting the needs that they have.”

Pontiac CCSD #429

Type: preK-8

Enrollment: 1,250

FY 18: \$105,605

FY 19: \$90,018

Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) dollars have helped Pontiac hire an additional social worker, math interventionist, math coach and part-time school resource officer, superintendent Brian Dukes said.

The additional social worker allows the district to have a social worker at each of the district’s four buildings. The move is in conjunction with a new social emotional curriculum the district is piloting to provide better supports for at-risk children.

“Our community has changed over the years, and we really felt like this was a position we needed to add,” Dukes said.

In addition, EBF should help boost the district’s math scores, Dukes noted. A new math interventionist is working with sixth, seventh and eighth graders identified as needing extra support.

Meanwhile, a new part-time math coach is providing professional development and classroom assistance for junior high math teachers. The coach will eventually transition to the elementary level.

“We’re able to catch kids and identify ones that need more help and then provide them with the support they need,” Dukes said.

As for the school resource officer, Dukes said, he will be shared with the high school, adding the office’s responsibilities will focus on building relationships with kids and educating them about law enforcement.

“EBF is truly allowing us to speed up the process on a number of initiatives and attack certain things as a district that we feel are important for our kids,” Dukes said.

Schaumburg CCSD #54

Type: preK-8

Enrollment: 15,003

FY 18: \$416,225

FY 19: \$404,250

Schaumburg District 54 was one of eleven school districts in the country recognized as a Model PLC for its exemplary work in establishing a high-achieving professional learning community in 2018. The collaborative processes and results orientation associated with this work correlate to excellent academic and social-emotional results in the district.

However, with Evidence-Based Funding dollars in hand, superintendent Andrew DuRoss said, the district has built on the PLC foundation by allocation resources intended to close the achievement gap for identified at-risk students.

Professional Learning Community teams in Schaumburg District 54 utilize curriculum-aligned acceleration practices five days a week for a half-hour in both literacy and mathematics.

“These specific and timely interventions are provided by highly qualified teachers in both literacy and mathematics hired using EBF.”

EBF are also being used to provide additional coaching and mentoring supports to teachers who specifically work with at-risk students.

Lastly, the district also utilized EBF to improve social-emotional supports for students. Additional social workers were hired, which was done in conjunction with the rollout of a new social-emotional learning curriculum, DuRoss said.

“The focus on Whole Child success is a critical component of our strategic plan and in fact, it is the most important work we do with children.”

DeKalb CUSD #428

Enrollment: 6,598

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$2.8 million

FY19: \$2.8 million

Helping students in the classroom and providing relief for taxpayers were two major priorities for DeKalb CUSD #428 with new Evidence-Based Funding dollars, Superintendent Jamie Craven said.

Enrollment in DeKalb CUSD #428 climbed 75 students last school year, which could have resulted in classroom sizes in the high 20s. However, Craven said, an influx in Evidence- Based Funding allowed the district to hire 11 more teachers, holding any increases at bay.

“Evidence-Based Funding is allowing us to keep pace with our increasing enrollment,” he said.

The district also used EBF to hire additional social workers, bringing the total to 11. The district now has a social worker for each attendance center.

The combination of additional teachers and social workers is providing a much-needed boost in social-emotional supports for students, roughly 60 percent of whom are considered low income.

“We were sharing social workers across our buildings and that just doesn’t work,” Craven said.

DeKalb CUSD #428 also opted to give taxpayers a break by abating a \$1.7 million bond and interest in last year’s levy. Residents in the district were paying a high rate and the board felt they needed some relief, he noted.

“Overall, Evidence-Based Funding is allowing us to explore more options that otherwise wouldn’t have been possible,” Craven said.

Highland CUSD #5

Enrollment: 2,868

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$146,477

FY19: \$115,483

Reducing elementary class sizes and re-implementing a building trades program have been the primary focus of Evidence-Based Funding at Highland CUSD #5, Superintendent Mike Sutton said.

Highland, like most school districts in Illinois, was forced to make cuts to staff and programs to stay afloat during years of state pro-ration. That resulted in an uptick in classroom sizes at the kindergarten- and first-grade levels to 26 students, in some instances.

However, the influx of EBF dollars allowed the district to address that issue by adding two teachers, Sutton said, bringing those class sizes down to 21 or 22 students.

At the high school level, Sutton noted, the district made cuts to the building trades program—a blow to the community because employers were in need of workers with vocational skills.

Because of EBF, the district is looking for a building trades teacher. It will also partner next year with the Collinsville Area Vocational Center, he added.

“There is a real focus in our area on preparing kids for job opportunities available right now in our community,” Sutton said. “We feel if we build some of those skills into kids, it’s going to open up a lot of doors for them.”

If lawmakers continue to invest in the formula, the money will make a difference in Highland.

“The money we’re getting may not seem like a lot, but it really gives us a positive outlook,” Sutton said.

Iroquois County CUSD #9

Enrollment: 1,009

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$317,944

FY19: \$168,544

Evidence-Based Funding is filling various needs in Iroquois County CUSD #9, from sustaining the district’s early childhood program and maintaining elementary classroom sizes, to offsetting an EAV that is growing marginally due to flooding in Watseka in 2015 and 2018, Superintendent Guy Gradert said.

Last year, many homes in the community, along with the district’s elementary school, Nettie Davis Elementary, suffered flood damage. As a result, the district found itself on the front line of trying to meet the basic needs of families, as well

as restore the school from flood damage - a process that ultimately displaced students for 17 days and forced local churches to provide instruction.

Evidence-Based Funding was also instrumental in helping the district maintain adequate levels of revenue as the local EAV experiences slow marginal growth of less than 1 percent annually. Moreover, the annual assessment may show a decrease due to flood mitigated properties.

“Floods devastate communities, and we’ve had two in the last five years,” Gradert said. “We’re not just supporting students’ education needs, but also providing support in other areas, such as food and mental health support.”

Evidence-Based Funding also preserved the district’s early childhood program, which lost its funding (totaling \$135,000) when the state changed its application and distribution process.

“There were never any questions that we weren’t going to fund the early childhood program,” Gradert said.

The district also used Evidence-Based Funding to hire one elementary teacher, which allowed classroom sizes in Iroquois County CUSD #9 to hold steady at 18 students.

A director of student services was also hired to help coordinate district initiatives. Lastly, Gradert noted, Evidence-Based Funding allowed for more budget flexibility because a greater portion of Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax dollars can be allocated to the O&M Fund for capital improvements. Next year, there are plans to add instructional coaches to the staff.

“Evidence-Based Funding has allowed us to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student population, while managing to provide a quality education for our students,” Gradert said.

Maywood-Melrose Park-Broadview #89

Enrollment: 4,872

Type: preK-8

FY18: \$3.1 million

FY19: \$1.5 million

Social-emotional supports available for children at Maywood- Melrose Park- Broadview #89 have increased dramatically as a result of Evidence-Based Funding (EBF), Superintendent Dr. David Negron said.

The district used its influx of EBF dollars to add 10 new positions, including four social workers and six behavior intervention specialists. The new social workers and behavior interventionists are being added across the district at both the middle and elementary schools.

Through meetings with teachers and community members as a part of the strategic planning process, Negron said, the district recognized students need more social-emotional supports if they are to improve academically. Maywood- Melrose Park- Broadview is a diverse district, and the community lacks resources.

“We already feel that these new positions are having a positive impact for our students and communities,” he said.

Adding behavior intervention specialists was another piece to the puzzle, Negron added. The behavior interventionists will help with data collection, analysis and practical implementation of positive behavior management, which leads to a healthy classroom environment where students are encouraged to grow and learn.

Lastly, Negron noted, EBF has allowed the district to focus on providing up-to-date academic resources, such as a new curriculum and technological resources.

“EBF has allowed us to make informed decisions that lead to better educational outcomes for students and address their educational and social needs,” he said.

Pinckneyville CHSD #101

Enrollment: 451

Type: 9-12

FY18: \$219,837

FY19: \$175,951

Investments from the Evidence-Based Funding formula is allowing Pinckneyville CHSD #101 to bring back staff and programs, Superintendent Keith Hagene said.

Pro-ration in state funds was “brutal,” Hagene said, resulting in cuts that included eliminating the district’s agriculture classes as part of eliminating 12 full-time positions.

“We had to get that program going again for students,” Hagene said. “Agriculture is vital for our community.”

In addition to bringing back an agriculture instructor, the district used EBF to expand its art program to full-time from part-time and adding a ELA/Reading Specialist.

“There was a population of our students that we were not meeting the needs of,” Hagene said. “It is vital for students to have a place to be creative and learn.” Other moves included hiring two paraprofessionals, one to support students in math and the other with reading. The latter also has a background in social work, which provides another level of social-emotional support for students.

As a result of hiring back staff and giving students more options, class sizes in Pinckneyville CHSD #101 have been reduced by 16 percent.

“EBF is allowing everybody to breathe a sigh of relief,” Hagene said. “We no longer are cutting, but rather expanding and growing.”

Belvidere CUSD #100

Enrollment: 8,003

Type: PreK-12

FY18: \$2.4 million

FY19: \$1.9 million

An influx in new state funds through the Evidence-Based Funding Model came at a crucial time for Belvidere CUSD #100, Superintendent Dr. Daniel Woestman said.

The district experienced growth in the number of students in need of additional social-emotional supports. With the new dollars, Woestman said, the district hired four additional social workers at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

“For multiple years principals have been coming back saying we need more social workers,” Woestman said. “We hadn’t really been able to move the needle on that until the new funding kicked in.”

In addition, Belvidere CUSD #100 used its new EBF dollars to hire math and reading interventionists to provide support for students who do not hit their growth targets. The district’s special education program has also gotten a boost because the district could afford to hire additional staff, Woestman added.

“We’re no longer trying to do more with the same number of people, but actually adding resources,” he said.

Overall, Woestman noted, the new formula is driving conversations within Belvidere CUSD #100 about how to base spending decisions on what the research says will raise student achievement.

“This is a student-centered approach to funding,” he said. “We’re grateful for the additional resources, and I hope the formula will continue to be funded appropriately.”

Jacksonville SD #117

Enrollment: 3,372

Type: PreK-12

FY18: \$313,482

FY19: \$257,425

Jacksonville SD #117 is using its Evidence-Based Funding dollars to help recruit teachers by raising starting salaries, Superintendent Steve Ptacek said.

Despite being the largest district in Morgan County, the starting salary (including benefits) for teachers in Jacksonville SD #117 was \$33,255 in 2017.

“We were losing teachers to other districts in the county, and we are by far the largest district,” Ptacek said. “It was a situation where teachers had larger class sizes and less pay.”

Thanks to EBF, Ptacek said, the district boosted the starting salary for new teachers to \$36,483— a move that is already starting to help with teacher recruitment. “When our new pay chart came out, the interest definitely increased,” he said.

While raising starting salaries, Ptacek noted, administration and the board were adamant about maintaining fiscal responsibility. Rather than just boost the starting salary of teachers, the district re-negotiated its contract with teachers and restructured the pay chart.

Ptacek added if it were not for the state pumping more dollars into the Evidence-Based Funding Formula, Jacksonville SD #117 would have had to cut programs to fill teaching positions.

“We would have had to look elsewhere to find the money,” he said. Moving forward, the district’s goal is to continue to raise the starting salary for teachers. Adding an interventionist to work with at-risk students in reading and math has also been identified as a priority.

“For us right now, it’s all about teachers,” he said.

Peoria SD #150

Enrollment: 13,222

Type: PreK-12

FY18: \$2.5 million

FY19: \$1.3 million

Evidence-Based Funding is filling a variety of needs in Peoria SD #150.

First and foremost, Superintendent Dr. Sharon Desmoulin- Kherat said, it continues to serve as the catalyst and inspiration to elevate the learning journey. This includes providing supports to schools that are interested in implementing a student-focused and career-focused vision, expanding technology, hiring social-emotional teacher aides and raising starting salaries of teachers.

Peoria SD #150 has a goal of being one-to-one, where a computer or tablet is provided for every student. Thanks to EBF, Desmoulin-Kherat said, the district is much closer to that goal.

“As we prepare our students for the 21st Century, a critical skill is the ability to use multimedia,” she said.

Providing more academic and social-emotional supports in the classroom for students was also important for Peoria SD #150. Desmoulin-Kherat said the district invested EBF dollars into hiring 13 Social-Emotional teacher aides at the elementary and middle schools.

“The SEL aides assist with de-escalating students so that they can get back on track and access more instruction,” she said.

A third need EBF helped fill, Desmoulin-Kherat added, is raising the starting salaries of teachers. The starting salary will increase by 15.2 percent, from \$35,902 to \$41,375 next year. EBF is also instrumental in making it possible to fund a

number of teacher recruitment initiatives, such as bonuses, referrals and exceptional placements to help offset the national teacher shortage.

Like many school districts, Peoria SD #150 has been affected by the teacher shortage, in part, because the starting salary lagged behind similar-sized districts. About 37 vacancies currently exist.

“EBF has helped Peoria Public Schools begin to improve its financial position and invest in innovative and meaningful instructional strategies that will help prepare students for productive and prosperous lives. For us, this is a very welcome change,” Desmoulin-Kherat said.

Queen Bee SD #16

Type: PreK-8

Enrollment: 1,777

FY18: \$452,064

FY19: \$330,836

Evidence-Based Funding is serving a different role in Queen Bee SD #16 than other districts with more limited resources.

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Williams said the main role the new state funding formula has served is to “validate and protect” the work currently being done to improve student achievement in the district.

“I really appreciate the framework and design of EBF formula,” Williams said. “Its research supported, so for us, it truly validates that we have been spending the money where it makes a difference, which is in the classroom.”

In recent years, Williams said, Queen Bee SD #16 has expanded its instructional coaching model and invested in a high-quality curriculum, among other things. That work has made a difference in improving academic scores, he said.

An additional revenue stream to support those efforts helps ensure the district can continue to provide the necessary supports for kids, he added.

“It’s providing extra security for us and, hopefully, will help us expand our instructional coaching, particularly in the area of math,” Williams said. “This money really does matter and make a difference for us.”

Vandalia CUSD #203

Enrollment: 1,460

Type: PreK-12

FY18: \$546,897

FY19: \$417,550

Evidence-Based Funding dollars served as a life raft for the cash-strapped Vandalia CUSD #203.

Dr. Jennifer Garrison, who is in her first year as superintendent, said pro-ration in general state aid decimated the district's finances, leading to several years of budget deficits of about \$500,000.

Therefore, when the General Assembly approved the Evidence-Based Funding Model in 2017 and routed additional dollars to needy schools, the most pressing need was obvious.

“Our first priority was to balance the budget,” Garrison said. “Through pro-ration, we had to sell working cash bonds, which only puts more burden on local taxpayers. We really wanted to ease that burden.”

However, Garrison added, the district was able to find enough money to hire an elementary teacher and begin to reduce classroom sizes.

Looking forward, she noted, the district wants to continue to reduce elementary class sizes. It also is looking to hire another school nurse, bring back elective courses at the high school and expand mental health supports for students. For that to happen, it will require lawmakers to properly fund the formula.

“We’re hoping in the next five years that we continue to see additional Evidence-Based Funding dollars, so we can make steps to enhance student outcomes by putting personnel and support services in place for students,” Garrison said.

Collinsville CUSD #10

Enrollment: 6,350

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$1.5 million

FY19: \$1.5 million

Pro-ration cost Collinsville CUSD #10 about \$20 million in state funding, so the district is using its Evidence-Based Funding dollars to dig out of that hole, Superintendent Dr. Robert Green said.

The first EBF payment last school year helped the district reach a new contract with its teacher's union. With the contract settled, the district is now investing dollars to bring back positions that were cut, Green said.

An assistant principal and ESL teacher were both hired with EBF dollars. EBF dollars were also used to hire some additional teachers to provide more academic support for students.

Furthermore, Collinsville CUSD #10 used EBF dollars, as well as some Title I dollars, to hire instructional and data coaches, Green noted.

"You don't have a lot of flexibility with Title I so EBF really gave us some more flexibility," he said.

In addition to personnel, EBF dollars were dedicated to boosting the district's STEM program.

Moving forward, Green said, the district plans to bring back about three staff members per year. The next position will be a counselor at the high school, a principal and another teacher.

"We're trying to take care of our current instructional needs and get a better handle on the problems we face," Green said. "EBF has really been a great thing for us. Money doesn't solve everything, but it certainly helps."

Mahomet-Seymour CUSD #3

Enrollment: 3,113

Type: preK-12

FY18: \$262,334

FY19: \$224,887

The passage of the Evidence-Based Funding Formula kick started a recovery process for Mahomet-Seymour CUSD #3.

Superintendent Dr. Lindsay Hall said pro-ration in general state aid hit the district hard, making it difficult to put staff and programs in place that are necessary to boost student achievement.

One of the district's first acts with the new EBF dollars, she said, was to create the position of a K–5 instructional coach.

“We knew what the research said about instructional coaching and realized it was an area where we clearly fell short,” Hall said.

Mahomet-Seymour is also using its new resources to reduce elementary classroom sizes. Two certified teachers were hired with the new dollars, which has kept classroom sizes from reaching the high 20s.

“We are at a number we are more comfortable with,” she said.

Because pro-ration in general state aid lasted years, Hall noted, it will take some time for Mahomet-Seymour to fully climb out of the hole that was dug.

The plan for next school year will be to bring back a counselor at the high school.

“(EBF) has allowed us to have great conversations about what we want to do with things that really impact teaching and learning,” Hall said. “Knowing you’re able to actually move ahead is a great thing.”

McLean County USD #5

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 13,346

FY18: \$353,687

FY19: \$367,878

Providing increased social-emotional supports for students has been the primary focus for how McLean County USD #5 is choosing to spend its new Evidence-Based Funding dollars, Superintendent Dr. Mark Daniel said.

That decision was based on feedback from teachers, staff and principals.

“Overwhelmingly, the faculty and staff said we need to focus more on social-emotional learning,” Daniel said. “Our students have greater behavior needs and need more help with coping mechanisms and self-regulation.”

The district has identified a number of areas of how it could provide more supports for students. Six social workers were hired. Already, the addition has led to a substantial decrease in referrals, Daniel noted.

Furthermore, two college and career counselors were hired at each of the district's two high schools. The funding for those positions was previously not available.

A social-emotional learning curriculum coordinator was also a new addition, Daniel said.

However, the district recognized, in order to be successful, teachers have to play a big role in providing social-emotional supports. Therefore, the district collaborated with the teacher's union to provide training.

Lastly, EBF dollars were used to provide professional development opportunities, which was done in conjunction with the union, for teachers on supporting students who have experienced trauma.

"We need to increase student empathy as well as increase self-control," Daniel said. "If we can do both of those things then I think we're on track to prepare our students to truly learn."

Pana CUSD #8

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 1,305

FY18: \$427,565

FY19: \$273,962

The list of ways Pana CUSD #8 is using its new Evidence- Based Funding dollars ranges from adding staff, updating curriculum to creating a new STEM lab, Superintendent Jason Bauer said.

The additional staff hires have included a director of curriculum and paraprofessional. An elementary guidance counselor and junior high teacher will come on board next school year.

Bauer said the elementary guidance counselor and paraprofessional were hired to improve the level of social- emotional supports for students.

A curriculum director is a new position for Pana CUSD #8. Creating that position was necessary to address curriculum needs, facilitate discussions with staff and free up principals to focus on other duties. The junior high teacher will help alleviate classroom sizes, he added.

EBF dollars are also being used to update the district's K-5 reading curriculum. The district's old curriculum was outdated and teachers had to piecemeal classroom materials together.

"We are making sure our teachers have the materials they need and facilitating discussions and providing support," Bauer said.

Creating a STEM lab is another initiative made possible because of EBF, Bauer noted. This summer, the district plans to redesign its junior high library and design the lab.

"We are very grateful for Evidence-Based Funding," Bauer said. "It's changed the narrative in our district. We are actually having discussions about what we can do for kids and not about what programs we have to get rid of."

Sterling CUSD #5

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 3,407

FY18: \$1.2 million

FY19: \$1 million

In his first year as superintendent in Sterling CUSD #5 in 2008, Dr. Tad Everett said 271 certified teachers worked in the district. By the 2015–16 school year, that number plummeted to 199—the result of substantial budget cuts necessitated by a drop in general state aid.

"We were really struggling," Everett said. "When EBF passed, it was a game changer for us."

After the passage of the new formula, Everett said, Sterling CUSD #5 identified key priorities to address with the new dollars. Those included:

- Improve student and staff safety and security.

- Increase supports for students struggling with social- emotional learning.
- Increase supports for struggling learners, with an emphasis on special education, math and class sizes.
- Improve the alignment of the curriculum, instructional practices and assessment system.

Last year, the district hired three elementary teachers, two 6–12 teachers, three special education teachers and a math interventionist. In addition, the district hired four social workers to improve social-emotional supports for students.

“Our education assessment data was telling us a story that our students were not meeting our standards,” Everett said. “We have been really focused on addressing these priorities, and it’s already starting to make a difference.”

The district has also made safety upgrades the past few years that were, in part, funded by EBF, Everett said. That includes bringing in a school resource officer, updating security cameras, hiring two security guards and making entrances safer.

Moving forward, Everett noted, the district also plans to use EBF to help hire a district-wide director of curriculum and instruction.

“The support we received from our state leaders and legislators, to formally approve and fund the EBF, is so appreciated,” Everett said. “This support has improved our building climates and student outcomes, and we have data showing that. At the end of the day though, as plainly as I can say it, our students have been the real winners of Illinois’ Evidence-Based Funding Model.”

Benton CCSD #47

Type: preK-8

Enrollment: 1,159

FY 18: \$501,856

FY 19: \$333,450

Safety, social-emotional supports and curriculum and instruction were the areas Benton CCSD #47 focused on with its Evidence-Based Funding dollars, Dr. Stephen Smith said.

In FY 18, Benton CCSD #47 used EBF dollars to hire a school resource officer and additional social worker. As a result, Smith said, the district immediately developed a risk assessment team to be able to better respond to a crisis.

“Safety is everyone’s top priority, so we felt we needed to add that level and be able to quickly assess a situation or get students help prior to anything happening,” he said.

Benton CCSD #47 also hired teachers, purchased new curriculum and expanded technology.

To address enrollment and scheduling issues, a middle school math teacher immediately came on board. Seventh grade Advanced Math and Algebra I at the 8th grade level were added in 2018-19. Moving forward, the plan is to add another science and ELA teacher at the middle school for the 2019-20 school year. The additional science teacher will allow the district to expand its STEM offerings, including a new robotics class.

In addition, the district used EBF dollars to purchase a new middle school science curriculum. The reading curriculum is currently being reviewed and will be updated next school year.

“It became pretty our clear reading curriculum was something that needed to be addressed,” Smith said. “Our teachers did what good teachers do when resources are cut. They pulled, shared, and developed their own. However, it created a situation where we had some holes. We are now moving toward a curriculum that is sequential and well aligned in grades K-8.

Lastly, Benton CCSD #47 used EBF dollars to purchase additional Chromebooks in an effort to transition into a one-to-one district. That process will be complete in 2020.

“We are trying to do things that are going to result in improved student academic outcomes,” Smith said. “We want to make sure our students are safe, having fun at school, and learning at a level that prepares them for a successful transition to high school and beyond.

Cicero SD #99

Type: preK-8

Enrollment: 11,874

FY 18: \$8.4 million

FY 19: \$4.7 million

Superintendent Rodolfo Hernandez said Cicero SD #99 is using its new Evidence-Based Funding dollars to transform the district.

One of the top priorities, he noted, is to eliminate the district’s pre-kindergarten waiting list, as well as sustain a full-day kindergarten program. To move in that direction, the district opened a new Early Childhood Center, which would not have been possible without EBF.

“In my district, we have a significant number of little ones who need services,” Hernandez said. “We really want to make sure our kids have a solid foundation at the primary grade levels.”

Evidence-Based Funding also made it possible for the district to open and staff two additional elementary STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) rooms, along with supplying the rooms with new materials and equipment.

The incorporation of STEAM is part of a larger mentality shift district-wide – supported by EBF – where students take ownership of their own learning, and subject matters are no longer taught in isolation. Furthermore, what’s unique about the expansion of STEAM, Hernandez added, is that parents are often invited to learn alongside their children.

“It’s such a wonderful experience to see the parents and students working together,” he said.

The focus on parental involvement extends beyond STEAM. Cicero SD #99 also used the new state dollars to fund GED classes, host parent leadership camps, and train para-professionals to help parents learn how to better support their children academically.

Lastly, EBF dollars have been instrumental in expanding after-school programming.

“It’s amazing what a few dollars can do,” Hernandez said. “It’s a slow process, but we are off to a good start in the transformation of our district.”

Granite City CUSD #9

Type: preK-12

Enrollment: 6,160

FY 18: \$2.9 million

FY 19: \$1.9 million

For the first time in five years, Granite City CUSD #9 is adding staff, Superintendent Jim Greenwald said.

Because of Evidence-Based Funding, the district hired 10 teachers before the start of this school year. The teachers cover a variety of needs for the district, including special education, kindergarten, elective courses and science classes.

Many of those positions were eliminated over the years due to pro-ration in general state aid.

“We had to cut electives, and we were in a situation where we were offering the basic, core curriculum and little else,” Greenwald said. “That’s just no way to educate kids.”

Technology was also a major focus for Granite City CUSD #9. Greenwald said the district used the new funding to purchase more than 2,200 Google Chromebooks.

“Before, we were just deploying carts to classrooms,” he said. “In this day and age, you have to better incorporate technology to properly meet student’s needs.”

Overall, Greenwald noted, EBF has had a significant impact on student learning, as well as being able to plan ahead and budget.

“I really do feel this is allowing us to operate as a good, solid school district,” he said. “I tip my cap to the legislature and everyone else for making this happen.”

Monmouth-Roseville CUSD #238

Type: PreK-12

Enrollment: 1,692

FY 18: \$855,795

FY 19: \$520,656

Monmouth-Roseville CUSD #238 started slowly with spending its new Evidence-Based Funding dollars but is ratcheting up efforts to restore programs and bring back staff that were lost due to years of pro-ration in general state aid, Superintendent Edward Fletcher said.

The district made three hires in FY 18 based on what the EBF model says is tied to raising student achievement. Monmouth-Roseville CUSD #238 hired a high school guidance counselor, first grade teacher and high school ESL teacher.

The latter was brought in to help serve English learners, which comprise a surprising 18 percent of the district’s enrollment. In total, 13 different languages are spoken by students, many of which arrive in the district because their families find work at food processing plants in Monmouth.

“We are a very unique district,” Fletcher said. “It’s hard to find a peer across Illinois.”

For next school year, the district plans to add reading and math instructional coaches, an additional third grade teacher, another ESL teacher, two student support specialists and an English Learner Family Coordinator.

“If kids don’t have food, water, light and power, we need try to help those families find resources, which in turn helps their kids succeed in school,” Fletcher said.

In addition, Fletcher noted, the district wants to use EBF dollars to bolster after-school programming for students, provide professional development for teachers and purchase additional curricular resources.

“Evidence-Based Funding has been a godsend for us,” he said. “There were a lot of lean years, and we were struggling. This came in and helped level the playing field for us.”

United Township High School District #30

Type: 9-12

Enrollment: 1,665

FY 18: \$1.1 million

FY 19: \$810,221

Before the passage of the Evidence-Based Funding Model, United Township High School District #30 was operating on the margins, Superintendent Dr. Jay Morrow said.

“Our property tax rate was established in the 1950s and hasn’t changed since,” he said. “We had to rely on borrowing during pro-ration of general state aid. EBF helped us stabilize our budget significantly.”

Morrow said the district has focused its EBF dollars on increasing technology and providing more social-emotional supports for students.

The district purchased more than a dozen Google Chromebooks mobile labs to greatly expand the usage of the devices, as well as updated the high school’s digital infrastructure to improve connectivity and internet speeds for students.

“That has been a very significant thing for us,” Morrow said about increasing the district’s technology budget.

United Twp HSD #30 also used its EBF dollars to hire an additional high school counselor. Thanks to a partnership with social service agencies, the district also added two mental health counselors who will work at the high school.

“So many of our counselors have to focus on career planning and college preparation, so they were just not able to devote enough time to meet as many needs as our students have,” Morrow said. “We felt it was important to dedicate resources so kids could get the help they need.”

