

At-Risk Funding

Nevada Task Force on K-12 Public Education Funding February 2014

Michael Griffith
School Finance Consultant
Education Commission of the States



The Goal of At-Risk Funding Programs

Provide resources to schools/districts so that they can help low-achieving and/or low-income students meet state standards

The Federal Governments Role

- The federal government provides Title I funding to low income schools/districts
- Title I is actually 4 different programs (*Basic grants, Concentration grants, Targeted grants and Ed. Finance Incentive grants*) each with their own funding formula
- Nevada Federal Title I funding:
 - FY 2012: \$106.5 million
 - FY 2013: \$101.4 million
 - FY 2014: \$115.8 million



Nevada Students Performing At or Above “Proficient” on 2013 NAEP Exams

	Non-F/R Lunch Students	F/R Lunch Students
Math – 4 th Grade	48.0%	25.2%
Math – 8 th Grade	41.3%	18.2%
Reading – 4 th Grade	44.0%	17.0%
Reading – 8 th Grade	41.2%	21.6%

Who Qualifies for Free/Reduced Price Lunches?

- **Reduced** price lunch – family income that is 185% of the federal poverty rate (\$35,131 for family of 3)
- **Free** priced lunch – family income that is 130% of federal poverty rate (\$25,389 for family of 3)

ECS At-Risk Funding Study

- ECS has reviewed at-risk funding in 41 states
- Findings:
 - 35 states provide some form of at-risk funding
 - 6 states do not provide funding
 - 25 provide funding inside of the state funding formula
 - 10 provide funding outside of the state funding formula

State At-Risk Funding

- Funding outside of the formula tends to take the form of grants:
 - Montana - The legislature allocates funds each year that are then distributed based on each districts Title I student count
 - West Virginia - Districts receive \$18 for each student counted in net enrollment.

State At-Risk Funding

Inside the State Formula

- Of the 25 states that provide funding inside of the state formula 24 provided at-risk students with an additional weight
- Weights varied from 1.8 (*Georgia*) to .0915 (*New Mexico*)
- The only state that did not provide a weight was Massachusetts - at-risk funds are provided on a per student basis (\$2,702/elementary and \$3,341/secondary)

How are Students Identified?

- Of the 35 states that provide at-risk funding – 23 use some form of free/reduced price lunch to identify at-risk students
 - 15 states use free or reduced price (F/R L) lunch as their sole identifier for at-risk funding
 - 3 states use only free lunch as an identifier
 - 5 states use F/R L as one of the measures for identifying at-risk students

Why Do States Use Free/Reduced Price Lunch

- A good tool for identifying at-risk students
 - Accounts for more than 57% of the variations in student achievement across schools
- Easy number to collect
 - This number is already collected by the federal government
- Consistent over time

Issues with F/R Lunch as a Measure

- Free/Reduced price lunch does not identify all students who are at-risk of failing
- The number of F/R lunch students decreases as students grow older
- More states are adopting student achievement measures as an identifier for at-risk students

At-Risk Funding

- Some states provide at-risk funding to districts based on total enrollment (Florida & West Virginia)
- Some states use student achievement measures as an identifier for at-risk students
 - Low performing students (Georgia & Utah)
- Some states make use of other poverty figures instead of F/R lunch
 - Student from low income families –(Nebraska, North Carolina & Vermont)
 - Qualification for Title I (Montana & New Mexico)



How are Students Identified?

- English language learners (4 states)
- Mobile Students (New Mexico & Utah)

Unique Student Identifiers

- Pregnant students (Texas)
- Children of military families (Texas)
- Students in single-parent families or families with at least one parent without a high school degree (North Carolina)
- Students in foster homes or in facilities for neglected and delinquent children (Oregon)

Funding Based on Student Density

- Research has shown that as a district/schools at-risk population increases the cost of educating each at-risk student increases
- Six states currently have funding systems that take the density of at-risk student populations into account (*Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska and Virginia*)

At-Risk School Funding Issues

- Should the state provide additional funding for at-risk students?
- If so, what is the appropriate funding level?
- How should the state identify at-risk students?
- Should the state fund ELL and at-risk separately or together?



Questions & Answers