NEVADA Department of Education

APA CONSULTING | AUGENBLICK, PALAICH AND ASSOCIATES

WestEd

January 16, 2026

Weighted Funding Work Group Update

Student Counts, Stacked Weights

Dr. Amanda Brown

Dr. Kelsey Krausen

Student Counts

Why Review Weighted Student Counts

- **Stability:** Student counts change from year to year. Large changes in student counts can create volatility in funding (particularly for small LEAs).

- **Alignment to student needs:** Funding is intended to support the needs of currently enrolled students. Using prior year counts may not fully reflect the resource needs of current students.

How does Nevada currently count students for its funding formula?

- Nevada funds on the **most recent four-quarter average membership** for adjusted base funding, but uses **prior year, single day (October 1)** student counts for weighted funding.
  - Students in weighted funding categories only receive the highest funding/weight they are eligible for:
    - English Learner students who do not have an IEP
    - At-risk students who do not have an IEP and are not EL students
    - Gifted students who do not have an IEP and are not EL or at-risk

What are the range of count approaches?

Using a Single Year of Data	Using an Average	Using a “Greater of" Approach
• Current year • Prior year	• Average of current and prior year • Average of prior two years • Average of three or more years (with or without current year)	• Greater of current or prior year • Greater of current year or two-year average • Greater of current year, prior year, or three-year average

How do other states count students?

- **For base or foundation funding:**
  - 46 states use membership and 5 states use attendance
  - 26 states use averaging, 15 states use a single day count, and 10 states use multiple day counts
  - 15 states fund on current year student counts and 17 states fund on prior year student counts
  - 19 states use an approach that either averages, combines, or provides the "better of" multiple years of student counts (10 of which include the current year, 9 of which use only prior years)
    - Examples: better of current or prior year; best of current year, prior year, or three-year average

Types of LEAs

- Count approach will have different impacts depending on whether an LEA's population is growing, declining, steady, or fluctuating.

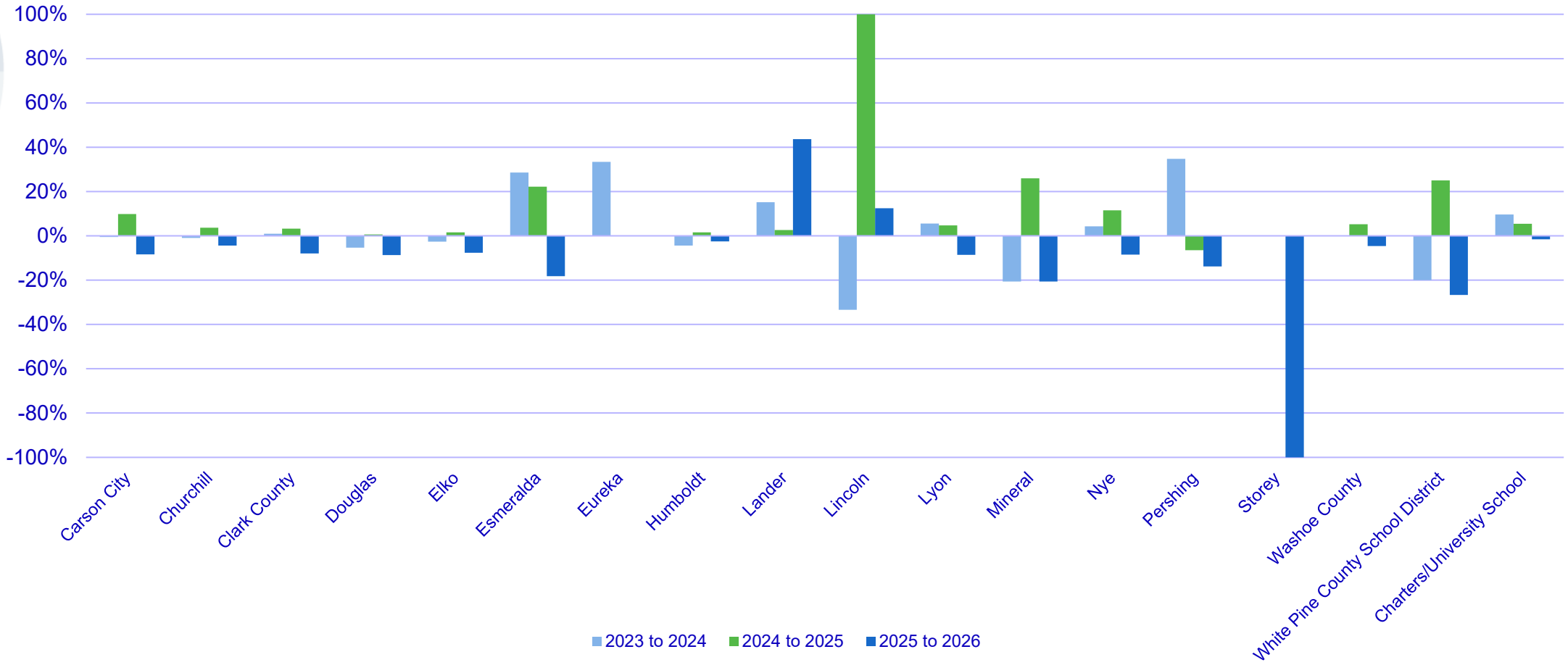
Growing LEAs

Declining LEAs

Steady LEAs

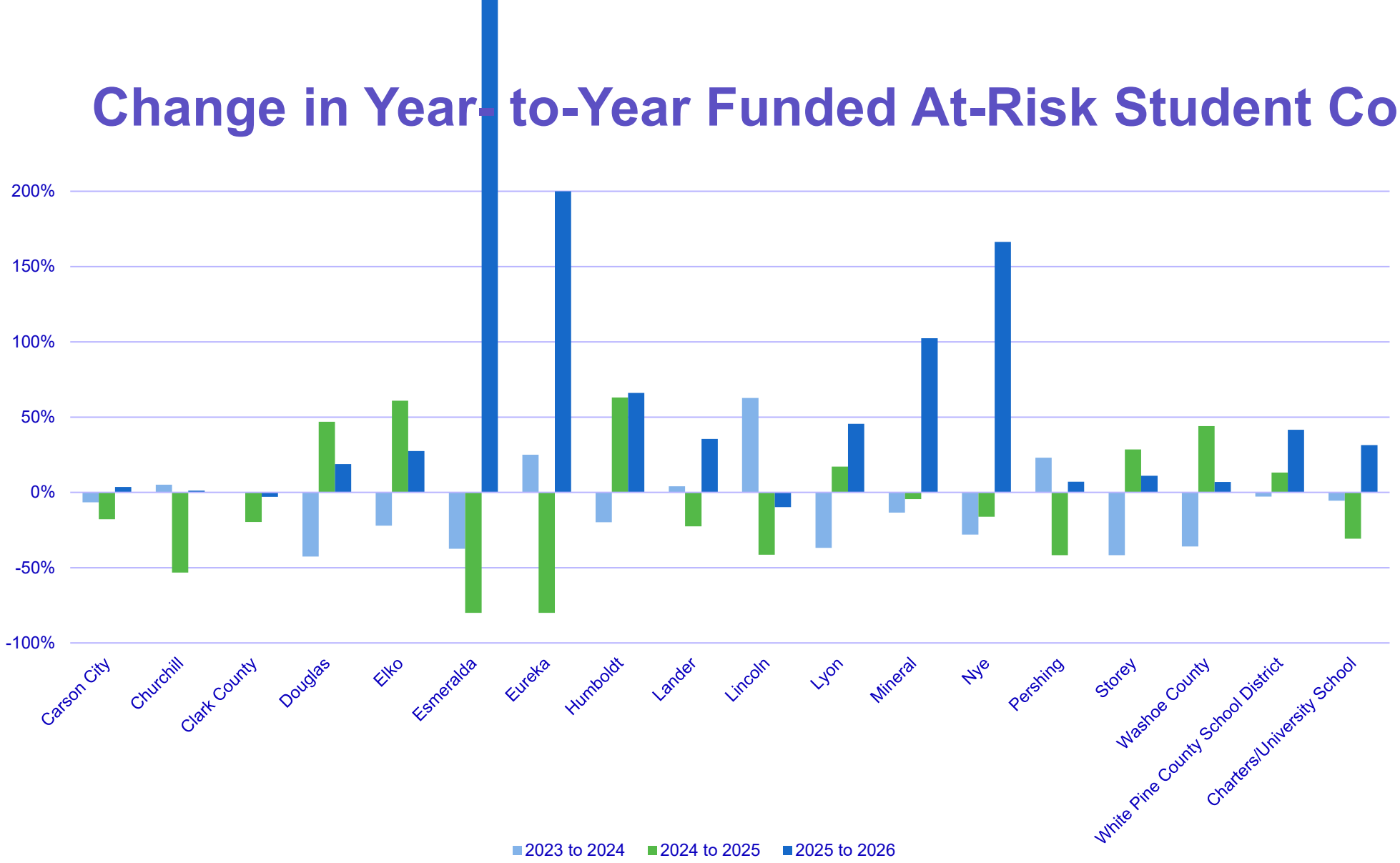
Fluctuating LEAs

Change in Year- to-Year Funded EL Student Counts



- Year to year percentage changes in EL counts in LEAs fluctuate in the majority of LEAs, with only a couple examples with any observable pattern of growth or decline.

Change in Year- to-Year Funded At-Risk Student Counts



- The percentage change in funded at-risk counts fluctuated between 2023 and 2026 for all LEAs.

Modeling Revisions to Nevada's Approach to Student Counts

- The work group requested modeling of three scenarios:
  - Moving to current year counts for weighted funding to align with the year used for base funding counts
  - Using a two-year average (which includes the current year) to provide greater stability for LEAs
  - Using a "greater of" approach (greater of current year or prior year) to provide benefit to the range of LEAs

Scenario 1: Shifting to Current Year

- **Pros**
  - Benefits LEAs with a growing population of students
  - Aligns funding with year students are served
- **Cons**
  - Single year data is less stable than a potential move to an average of multiple years
  - LEAs with declining populations would have fewer students counted for funding and may lose funding midyear
  - Less predictable for the state when current year is used
  - Additional administrative burden
  - Timing of payments may not align with budgeting/program delivery

Scenario 2: Two-Year Average (Current and Prior Year)

- **Pros**
  - More stability with two years of data considered, which is important for fluctuating LEAs (majority of NV LEAs)
  - Positively impacts growing LEAs while cushioning impact of declining populations
  - Greater alignment between funding and when students are served
- **Cons**
  - Growing LEAs have fewer students counted than if current year alone is used, while declining LEAs have fewer students counted than if prior year data is used
  - If current year is included in average, similar considerations regarding predictability, administrative burden, and payment timing

Scenario 3: Greater of Current Year or Prior Year

- **Pros**
  - Most positively impacts growing, declining, and fluctuating LEAs
  - More alignment between funding and when students are served by including current year
- **Cons**
  - Since current year is an option, similar considerations regarding predictability for the state, administrative burden, and payment timing
  - As it results in the highest count of students, it is the most costly to the system

Count Scenarios: State-Level Impacts, FY26

	EL			At-Risk			GATE		
	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.
Current Approach: Prior Year	55,758	$236.3	NA	50,970	$168.0	NA	8,724	$9.9	NA
Scenario 1: Shifting to Current Year	51,984	$220.3	-6.8%	51,646	$170.2	1.3%	8,945	$10.1	2.5%
Scenario 2: Two-Year Average	53,871	$228.3	-3.4%	51,308	$169.1	0.7%	8,835	$10.0	1.3%
Scenario 3: Greater of Current Year or Prior Year	55,776	$236.3	0.0%	52,904	$174.4	3.8%	9,051	$10.2	3.7%

- **Scenario 1** would decrease the count of EL students/funding by 7%, increase at-risk by just over 1%, and increase GATE by 2.5%. The differing impacts between FY25 and FY26 highlight the impact of year to year variability on if prior year vs. current year is higher.
- **Scenario 2** would decrease the count of EL students/funding by 3%, increase at-risk by just under 1%, and increase GATE by just over 1%, reducing year-to-year differences.
- **Scenario 3** would keep the count of EL students/funding stable, increase at-risk by about 4%, and similarly increase GATE by about 4%, providing the most positive counts/funding for each group.

Count Scenarios: State-Level Impacts, FY25

	EL			At-Risk			GATE		
	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.	Count	Funding (millions)	% Diff.
Current Approach: Prior Year	53,660	$227.4	NA	60,794	$200.4	NA	8,317	$9.4	NA
Scenario 1: Shifting to Current Year	55,758	$236.3	3.9%	50,970	$168.0	-16.2%	8,724	$9.9	4.9%
Scenario 2: Two-Year Average	54,709	$231.8	2.0%	55,882	$184.2	-8.1%	8,521	$9.6	-2.4%
Scenario 3: Greater of Current Year or Prior Year	55,760	$236.3	3.9%	62,512	$206.0	2.8%	8,772	$9.9	5.5%

- **Scenario 1** would increase the count of EL students/funding by 4% and decrease at-risk by 16%, and increase GATE by 5%.
- **Scenario 2** would increase the count of EL students/funding by 2%, decrease at-risk by 8%, and decrease GATE by about 2.5%, reducing year-to-year differences.
- **Scenario 3** would increase the count of EL students/funding by 4%, increase at-risk by 3%, and increase GATE by 5.5%, providing the most positive counts/funding for each group.

Count Scenarios: LEA-Level Impacts, FY25

	Scenario 1: Shifting to Current Year			Scenario 2: Two-Year Average			Scenario 3: Greater of Current Year or Prior Year		
	EL	At-Risk	GATE	EL	At-Risk	GATE	EL	At-Risk	GATE
Carson City	10%	-18%	-9%	5%	-9%	-5%	10%	0%	0%
Churchill	4%	-53%	0%	2%	-27%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Clark	3%	-20%	6%	2%	-10%	3%	3%	0%	7%
Douglas	1%	47%	44%	0%	23%	22%	1%	47%	44%
Elko	2%	61%	27%	1%	30%	13%	2%	61%	27%
Esmeralda	22%	-80%	0%	11%	-40%	0%	22%	0%	0%
Eureka	0%	-80%	0%	0%	-40%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Humboldt	2%	63%	0%	1%	32%	0%	2%	63%	0%
Lander	3%	-23%	0%	1%	-11%	0%	3%	0%	0%
Lincoln	100%	-41%	0%	50%	-21%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Lyon	5%	17%	43%	2%	9%	21%	5%	17%	43%
Mineral	26%	-4%	0%	13%	-2%	0%	26%	0%	0%
Nye	12%	-16%	0%	6%	-8%	0%	12%	0%	0%
Pershing	-6%	-42%	0%	-3%	-21%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Storey	0%	29%	-100%	0%	14%	-50%	0%	29%	0%
Washoe	5%	44%	-1%	3%	22%	-1%	5%	44%	0%
White Pine	25%	13%	0%	13%	7%	0%	25%	13%	0%
Charters/University Schools	5%	-31%	4%	3%	-15%	2%	6%	0%	4%

Count Scenarios: LEA-Level Impacts, FY26

	Scenario 1: Shifting to Current Year			Scenario 2: Two-Year Average			Scenario 3: Greater of Current Year or Prior Year		
	EL	At-Risk	GATE	EL	At-Risk	GATE	EL	At-Risk	GATE
Carson City	-8%	4%	-23%	-4%	2%	-11%	0%	4%	0%
Churchill	-4%	1%	0%	-2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Clark	-8%	-3%	2%	-4%	-1%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Douglas	-9%	19%	1%	-4%	9%	0%	0%	19%	1%
Elko	-8%	27%	-11%	-4%	14%	-5%	0%	27%	0%
Esmeralda	-18%	500%	0%	-9%	250%	0%	0%	500%	0%
Eureka	0%	200%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	200%	0%
Humboldt	-3%	66%	0%	-1%	33%	0%	0%	66%	0%
Lander	44%	35%	0%	22%	18%	0%	44%	35%	0%
Lincoln	13%	-10%	0%	6%	-5%	0%	13%	0%	0%
Lyon	-9%	46%	-62%	-4%	23%	-31%	0%	46%	0%
Mineral	-21%	102%	0%	-10%	51%	0%	0%	102%	0%
Nye	-8%	166%	0%	-4%	83%	0%	0%	166%	0%
Pershing	-14%	7%	0%	-7%	4%	0%	0%	7%	0%
Storey	-100%	11%	0%	-50%	6%	0%	0%	11%	0%
Washoe	-5%	7%	11%	-2%	3%	5%	0%	7%	11%
White Pine	-27%	42%	0%	-13%	21%	0%	0%	42%	0%
Charters/University Schools	-2%	31%	5%	-1%	16%	2%	0%	31%	5%

Considerations for Student Count Approaches

- Adjustments to the method for base funding counts to align with any changes to the weighted student counts may be merited
- Hold harmless provisions intended to reduce volatility may no longer be necessary
- Some approaches may create additional administrative burden for LEAs and NDE
- Switching to a “greater of” approach may have implications for the transparency/predictability of the model
- Some approaches have implications for LEA and NDE budget planning. If funding amounts change after budget/programmatic decisions have been made, it can create challenges for LEAs.
- Due to previously approved appropriations, some approaches could require other adjustments to per pupil funding.
- Some approaches may change the timing of payments to LEAs

Stacked Weights

Why Consider Stacked Weights

- Students currently are eligible in more than one category but only receive their highest weight/funding amount.
- LEAs still have to provide all needed services to students regardless of what funding they receive.
  - Overlap between allowable services is likely different between special education services required in IEPs (which are subject to federal requirements/law) vs. supports for at-risk or EL students (which, in turn, have more overlap based on allowable uses in NV statute).

Do other states provide highest only or stacked weights?

- In states with weighted student funding formulas:
  - The majority of states (25) provide weights that are “stacked” — meaning that students receive all weights they are eligible for.
  - Several states use a hybrid approach where students can receive a combination of some weights, but not all.
    - For these states, at-risk and English Learner students can be in a combined category, or students can only receive funding for one.
    - These states still allow students to generate special education funding plus funding from other student weights.
- Nevada is unique, with students receiving only the highest weight/funding amount they are eligible for.

Possible Weight Scenarios Explored

Current Approach: Highest Weight Only

Scenario 1: Special Education + Highest of EL, At-Risk, or GATE Weights

Scenario 2: Stacked (students receive all weights they are eligible for)

Weight Scenario 1: Special Education + Highest Weight of EL, At-risk, and GATE

- **Pros**
  - Better acknowledges funding needed for the different supports and services students are eligible for
  - Addresses concern regarding lack of overlap between special education services and supports for at-risk and EL students
  - Consistent with approach used in the several states that do not use stacked weights
- **Cons**
  - This would result in an increased number of students who receive weighted funding; with fixed approved appropriations, this means EL, at-risk, and GATE weights and/or base funding will need to be lower.

Weight Scenario 2: Stacked Weights

- **Pros**
  - Acknowledges funding needed for **all** the supports/services students are eligible for
  - Addresses concerns about required services not overlapping for student groups
  - Use of stacked weights is consistent with the majority of other states that provide weighted funding
- **Cons**
  - This would result in an increased number of students who can receive weighted funding. With fixed appropriations, this would lower weights and/or base funding.
  - This would overfund any overlapping services (i.e., if the same support, like after-school tutoring or counseling, is provided to a student if they are at-risk **or** EL).
  - Analysis of the appropriate weights for students in multiple categories would likely be needed.

Considerations for Stacked Weights

- If available funding remains flat, stacked funding will require a decrease in the weight or amount of funding per student.
- It is necessary to fully explore the overlap in allowable uses to determine appropriateness of students receiving one or multiple weights, or if different weights would be required.
- It will be necessary to consider how the weights were developed/intended and the resources they were supposed to provide.
- Some programmatic decisions may change if funding was provided for all GATE students under a stacked weight model.

Questions & Discussion