At-Risk Students:
A conversation around defining options

Presentation to the Nevada State Board of Education

October 8, 2020

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Agenda

- ✓ Commission on School Funding Update
- ✓ Review definitions of at-risk previously considered by the Nevada Commission on School Funding
- ✓ Further explore the Infinite Campus module
- ✓ Nevada Department of Education Recommendations

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

“At-Risk” in Nevada Revised Statutes

- **NRS 387.1211**
  - **“At-risk pupil”** means a pupil who is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 et seq., or an alternative measure prescribed by the State Board.
  - This definition becomes effective July 1, 2021.

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch:

Strengths

- Consistent with the definition used by a majority of states that provide additional at-risk funding providing an opportunity for Nevada to compare itself to those states.
- Definition implemented by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to identify Economically Disadvantaged students and programmatic reporting on FRL students is already required under ESSA.
- Is currently the poverty measure for district allocations of Tile I funds.
- Past data is available making it easier to study the effects of the funding.

Weaknesses

- Increases both the false positive and false negative identification of students that are at-risk, leaving less dollars for students that are at-risk.
- Does not consider any academic factors.
- Issues with tracking pupils without violating confidentiality.
- Increased identification problem for Schools that qualify for the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA), a federally-funded nutrition program that passed in 2010. Included in the Act is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which states that every student in a school is eligible to receive free meals if social services or the school districts have identified 40 percent or more of the students are eligible through direct certification.

Opportunity Gap Methodology

- Select an opportunity gap, identify the source of the gap, and use evidenced-based strategies to lessen or remove the gap.
  - Examples:

    Gap: *Proficiency in math drops significantly between grades 4 and 5*

    Evidence-Based Strategy: *Increase community engagement and parental involvement.*
- Re-evaluate each biennium.

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Opportunity Gap

Strengths

- Identify an issue affecting education and solve or reduce its impact.
- Potential for wide impact on issues affecting many students.
- Issues can be identified and selected each biennium.

Weaknesses

- Selected issue could have little historical data making the tracking of outcomes more difficult.
- Could add additional and potentially burdensome reporting requirements each biennium.
- Selected issue could re-occur if funding pulled for a newly selected issue.
- Issue could be difficult to align with per pupil funding plan.
- No other state has implemented an issue approach.
- Issue could result in reduced flexibility of use of funds at school level.

Alternative at-risk factors

- In the bottom quartile as measured by the statewide summative assessment.
- In Foster Care
- Family is living below the poverty line
- Repeated a grade

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Alternative Factors

Strengths

- Includes educational and economic factors in determining at-risk.
- Transparent: Easy to explain and understand.
- Removes confidentiality concerns.

Weaknesses

- Potential for significant changes in qualifying enrollment.
- Significantly reduces FY20 projected at-risk enrollment, increasing the chance for a false negative.
- While a few states include educational factors in identifying at-risk, the use of economic and educational factors would be unique to Nevada and lose comparability with other states

Infinite Campus-Machine Learning

- Goal is to identify students at-risk of not graduating with their cohorts.
- Machine learning algorithm used to identify and track student performance and the factors that increase risk to those students.
- Daily input factors involving:
  - Academic
  - Attendance
  - Behavior
  - Home and enrollment stability
  - Situational

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Infinite Campus

Strengths

- Provides real time data synchronization.
  - Daily inputs and outputs
- Does not add reporting requirements.
- Increased accuracy: Reduces false positive and false negative identifications.
- Easy and timely to implement
- Provides tools for identifying students facing situations increasing their risk and tailoring support services to those identified.

Weaknesses

- Methodology lacks in transparency:
  - Difficult to explain
- Difficult to verify methodology

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!

Recommendation

- Define “at-risk” as an increased probability of a student not persisting to graduation with their cohort.
- Expand definition to include, “based on attendance, behavior, academic, stability and GRAD scores.”

Nevada Department of Education
Nevada Ready!