

# **Funding for At-Risk Students: A conversation around defining indicators**

Presentation to the Commission on School Funding  
Student Achievement Division

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# Agenda

- ✓ At-Risk Defined in Nevada Revised Statutes
- ✓ Free and Reduced Priced Lunch
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  - ✓ Eligibility
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- ✓ At-Risk as a K-12 Funding Indicator
- ✓ Nevada Department of Education Recommendations

# 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.

# Free and Reduced Priced Lunch (FRL) Defined

- **The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child-care institutions.** It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or no-cost lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1946. Students who use this service are included in the FRL count of each school.
- In the Nevada Department of Education Consolidated State Plan under ESSA or Every Student Succeeds Act, **a low-income student is defined as a student who is eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.** This definition is consistent with the United States Department of Education's (USDOE) use of FRL to identify Economically Disadvantaged students.

# Free and Reduced Priced Lunch (FRL) Eligibility

- FRL is a count of students who are eligible to receive the service at each school and in each district. FRL is district reported data provided to the Department by each district. There have been two primary ways to qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP):

## Indirect Certification

- Any parent or guardian can apply for FRL by filling out an application with a self declaration of income.
- All Indirect applications that meet the income requirements, based on the application, are eligible to receive FRL.
- There is no income verification and applications are subject to sample audits

## Direct Certification

- Students may be directly certified if they are eligible under a qualifying program:
  - Supplemental Nutritional Aid Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Foster Care and Homeless.
  - SNAP, TANF and Medicaid are determined by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and they provide eligibility data to the Department every two weeks.
  - Foster eligibility is determined by the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Department is currently working on a pilot data exchange similar to DHHS.
  - Homeless students are self reported through the Local Education Agency (LEA).

# Free and Reduced Priced Lunch (FRL) Data Indicator

- FRL is one of the populations used to disaggregate data for all school levels as per ESSA in the **Nevada Accountability System** and is used to identify students who are Economically Disadvantaged (ED). Other populations used in data disaggregation and reporting include students from major racial and ethnic groups, students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and students who are English learners.
- **Title I grant:** FRL is the poverty measure for district allocations for Title I. The State receives roughly \$120 million every year for Title I, and the purpose is to supplement interventions, strategies, and activities at those eligible Title I schools that are selected by districts to be served, based on FRL percentages.
  - Title I, 1003(a) School Improvement grants must only fund CSI, TSI, or ATSI schools. (For CSI schools, they must be Title I schools in the bottom 5%.)
- **Title IVA:** Funding is prioritized for high-needs schools, as defined by districts. Many districts in Nevada have leveraged these funds for the federally designated schools (CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools) and for Title I schools.
- FRL is used in determining **Victory schools** (high poverty zip codes) and allocations for **SB 178 eligibility** (bottom quartile performers who are low-income or EL).

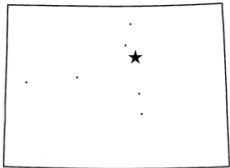
# At-Risk as a K-12 Funding Indicator

- There are **43 states** plus the District of Columbia that provide additional funding for at-risk students.
- There are more than **20 methods** that states use to determine a student's at-risk status.
- A majority of states use the student's eligibility for the **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** or FRL data.
- There is a variance between states on how at-risk students are funded and how much money they receive.

# At-Risk Funding Nationally

## Formulaic Funding

- *States provide an additional dollar amount per student or an additional weight.*



**Colorado**



**Maine**

## Categorical Funding

- *Created by legislatures outside of the state's primary formula to fund for a specific purpose, such as at-risk.*



**Washington**



# At Risk-Funding by Weighted Formula

State	Method For Identifying At-Risk Students
California	National School Lunch Program/FRL, English Language Learners, foster care
District of Columbia	Homeless, foster youth, an over-age high school student, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families eligible, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligible
Massachusetts	Multiple weights formula for low-income students based on the percentage of low-income students in the district
Oregon	Students in poverty (census), foster youth, living in facilities for neglected or delinquent children
Wyoming	National School Lunch Program/FRL

- ❖ *This table provides a snapshot of states that use “at-risk” as an indicator in a weighted formula.*
- ❖ *Alaska, Arizona, Idaho and South Dakota do not have programs to fund at-risk students.*
- ❖ *Montana, Utah, and Washington have categorical funding for at-risk students.*

# Nevada Department of Education's Recommendation

## **Continue to define at-risk students according to data from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**

- This provides the Department and policymakers an opportunity to study the effects of implementing this indicator as well as an opportunity to research and consider other options in place of FRL.
- This provides an opportunity for Nevada to continue to compare itself to a majority of states that use FRL as an indicator for at-risk funding.

# References

- Education Commission of the States. (2019, August). *50-State Comparison: K-12 Funding*. Education Commission of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-k-12-funding/>.
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