



Definition of Optimal Funding for Nevada School Funding Commission

Introduction

In meetings on September 25, October 16, and November 13, 2020, the Nevada School Funding Commission held discussions aimed at defining the key term *optimal funding*. The Commission challenged itself to create a definition that was clear in strategic intent, measurable, inclusive of all Nevada's students, and described as phases or a progression beyond the current funding level. In order to address all four of these characteristics, the attached document offers both a conceptual definition and additional information that helps to make the definition operational or actionable. As it became clear in its October and November meetings, there is much critical work yet to be done by the Commission before it is ready to recommend dollar amounts and funding levels. This document aims to inform, anchor, and guide those next tasks while building on consensus established among the Commission members.

The attached definition, then, includes several parts:

1. A revised conceptual definition based on Commission members' discussions and incorporating feedback on a previous draft during the November 13 meeting;
2. A three-part progression from the current funding level to an optimal level;
3. Suggested action steps for each level;
4. A basis or starting point for each level; and
5. A tentative set of possible progress measures for each level.

The Commission adopted this defining framework on November 13, 2020, with the expectation that the minor adjustments included in this document version 1.2.2 would be incorporated prior to re-submission.

Conceptual Definition of *Optimal Funding*

Optimal funding in Nevada is that which enables the state's schools and districts uniformly and equitably to provide resources and services designed to produce exemplary student performance on par with the nation's best. Optimal funding is a strategic investment to intensify the use of effective practice recommendations contained in the State Improvement Plan, leading to exceptional achievement for all Nevada students.

Progression to Optimal Funding

Restore and Maintain

- Definition - Sufficient to bring funding to previous baseline level
- Action - Restore funding to the original budget amount legislatively approved in the 2019 regular session, adjusted for inflation
- Basis - 2019-21 budget
- Measures
 - Total funding per student per yearBaseline performance on student outcomes reported to state and/or federal entities in 2019-20

Adequate

- Definition - Sufficient for all students to meet state standards and statutory requirements
- Action - Establish adequate per-pupil base funding with target weights
- Basis - APA study(ies), updated for inflation
- Measures
 - Total funding per student per year
 - Performance on the student outcomes reported annually to state and/or federal entities in 2020 and beyond
 - APA study metrics

Optimal

- Sufficient for strategic investment in practices and resources aligned with Nevada's 5-year renewable strategic plan that lead--for all students--to exemplary student achievement on par with the nation's best
- Action
 - ✓ With assistance of NDE (1) identify targeted student outcomes to be achieved and (2) associated practices and resources designed to produce those outcomes.
 - ✓ Calculate funding requirements through pupil-centered funding model
- Basis - Cost estimates to implement strategic investments associated with targeted student outcomes
- Measures
 - ✓ Total funding per student per year
 - ✓ Performance on the student outcomes reported annually to state and/or federal entities
 - ✓ Performance on targeted student outcomes reported annually
 - ✓ Implementation status for uniform and equitable practices reported annually
 - ✓ APA study metrics