

Working Group 4

More Resources for At-risk Students

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Policy Area:

System that Ensures At-risk Students are Successful that supports these students and their families as soon as they arrive at school with both academic supports and extensive case management to address social, physical, mental, and family needs to enable success at school.

Element Detail 4a: Add a **concentrated poverty weight** to the funding formula to support intensive services for students and their families to enable them to succeed in school, that are coordinated and able to meet the additional needs of students in schools located in distressed communities. Add **funding amounts** for schools with concentrated poverty to establish community schools to provide wrap-around services and provide health and behavioral health services.

Design Assumptions:

1. Maryland provides substantial funding for at-risk students through its foundation and compensatory education funding formula which many schools utilize to provide wrap-around services to students in need of additional supports. However, top performing systems around the world provide additional funds to provide a greater degree of additional services for those students that are at the highest risk of not succeeding in school.
2. Additional funding for schools with concentrated poverty will allow Maryland to provide funds to schools with high levels of poverty to enhance or establish programs and services to support the needs of students in those schools. The funding would be comprised of a fixed amount and a per pupil amount.
3. This additional funding would be available to every school in which at least X% of students qualify for free and reduced price meals. But each school would have to submit an implementation plan based on an assessment of need.
4. A fixed amount would be provided for each school in which at least X% of students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. This fixed funding would be used to hire a community schools coordinator and a health services practitioner. In addition to the fixed amount of funding would be an amount per student enrolled at the school. This per pupil funding (in combination with the compensatory education funding formula) could be used to provide programs and services. This would include, but not be limited to:
 - a) additional extended learning time including before and after school;
 - b) safe transportation to school;
 - c) vision and dental screening;
 - d) additional social workers;
 - e) physical and behavioral health and wellness including providing food for in-school and out-of-school time and linkages to community providers;
 - f) family and community engagement and supports including informing parents of academic course offerings, opportunities for children and social services;
 - g) linkages to Judy Centers that feed into the school;
 - h) student enrichment experiences;
 - i) improving student attendance; and
 - j) improving the learning environment at the school

Implementation Considerations:

1. Implementation plans should include but are not limited to:
 - a) A community based needs assessment process that is conducted in partnership with a local capacity building organization to develop an implementation strategy for addressing the needs of the students and their families and building on and strengthening community resources near the school;
 - b) Ensuring that an experienced and qualified community schools coordinator at a vice principal level is hired;
 - c) Inclusion of community partners in geographic proximity to the school who can assist in meeting the needs identified;
 - d) Ensuring that time is made available to train staff on the support offered, identifying the need for supports and how to engage with the community school coordinator in engaging with these supports; and
 - e) Development of strategies to maximize external non-State or local education funding.
2. Local school systems must demonstrate that funds provided under the weight are being provided to the schools in which the weight is applicable and are being used for the purpose of implementing the plans.
3. Local governments would be expected to demonstrate support through meaningful partnership and support that is supplemental to and does not supplant existing efforts.
4. Partner agencies such as local management boards should participate at the State level and provide necessary funding and support to enable local agencies to participate as partnering organizations.
5. Accountability should focus on indicators that include, but are not limited to: successful implementation of the plan, number of students served and not served, time to receive services, attendance, enrichment opportunities, reduction in disciplinary actions, student and principal satisfaction, and meaningful family involvement.
6. Every year districts will be required to report on their program including progress on indicators. The full commission should include this element in their discussions of accountability and governance including whether there should be consequences and what those consequences should be if progress is not being made.
7. Schools with a lower poverty threshold could still provide wrap-around services, organize a community school, and/or provide health and behavioral health services using their compensatory education funding.

Outstanding Issues:

1. At what level of school concentration of poverty does the additional funding begin and at what level will it reach the full amount?
2. What proxy should be used for identifying FRPM students going forward?
3. To whom should the implementation plans be submitted? Are the plans subject to approval? Who approves the plans? What metrics would measure success?
4. Finalizing the concentration of poverty cost calculations requires that the per student base, the compensatory education weight, and the proxy for identifying FRPM student also be finalized.
5. What are the phase-in priorities? Should the schools with the greatest concentration of poverty be given priority?

Element Detail 4b (referred to full commission): Train school staff in all schools to recognize mental health issues as well as other issues related to trauma and coordinate access to needed mental health and other services for students, as part of effort to increase school safety (see SB 1265 – signed into law as Chapter 30)

Element Detail 4c: Revise funding formula weight for **special education students**.

Design Assumptions:

1. State and federal law require school systems to identify, locate, and evaluate all students who have or are suspected of having disabilities and in need of special education and related services.
2. To ensure students are not misidentified as being disabled, the law defines a list of eligible disabilities and students must meet one of those criteria.
3. The timeline for identifying, locating, and evaluating students for special education and related services is established in State and federal law and regulation. Parental consent is required for students to be evaluated. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be developed within 30 days of the date a student is identified as a student with a disability.
4. HB1415 was enacted in the 2018 session and it required MSDE, in consultation with DBM and DLS, to contract for an independent study to evaluate funding methodologies used nationally and internationally and make recommendations regarding the appropriate level of funding for special education students in Maryland.
5. Differentiated weights are preferred in principle, but APA proposed a blended weight. It is anticipated that the special education study required by HB 1415 will propose differentiated weights. In the meantime, the Commission will propose a single placeholder weight.

6. To provide special education resources, local school systems spend more than the current funding formula provides.
7. Total State and local expenditures on special education equaled \$1.567 billion in fiscal 2015. Of this, the State provided \$272 million, or 17.3% of the total. Thus the local funding accounted for the remaining \$1.296 billion.
8. A weight of 2.18 is recommended as the “stop-gap” weight until the completion of the special education study required by HB1415 and until any recommendations of the study are implemented in law. This weight is calculated based on the fiscal 2015 foundation per pupil base of \$6,860. For context, the weight in current law is 0.74. The weight will be recalculated once the Commission determines a new foundation base such that an equivalent amount of State funds are generated as the weight of 2.18 would generate.
9. The result of this stop gap weight is that State funding, in fiscal 2015 dollars, increases by 195% from \$272 million to \$800 million. This increases the State proportion of expenditures from 17% to 51%.

Implementation Considerations:

1. Because a special education study required by HB 1415 is due by December 2019, the new weight may be revised again in response to the study recommendations. It is anticipated that the placeholder weight recommended by the Commission may be in place for up to 3 years while the completed study is being reviewed and incorporated into State law.
2. Although school districts will have discretion in repurposing approximately \$529 million in local funds, they are encouraged to reinvest a portion back into special education as appropriate to provide a robust level of services to meet the needs of the special education students.

Table 1
Fiscal 2015 Special Education Expenditures

<u>Adjusted Total Expenditures*</u>	<u>Fall 2014 Enrollment</u>	<u>Per Pupil Expenditures</u>	<u>Equivalent Weight**</u>
\$1,567,335,305	104,618	\$14,982	2.18

* Fiscal 2015 Selected Financial Data, excluding federal funds, infants and toddlers, and nonpublic placements. Includes fixed charges.

** Weight assumes current law per pupil base of \$6,860 in fiscal 2015 (weight of 0.74). Assuming the APA recommended base of \$10,880, the equivalent weight is 1.38.

Table 2
Fiscal 2015 Special Education State Aid

	<u>State Aid</u>	<u>% of Adjusted Total Expenditures</u>
Actual	\$271,702,887	17.3%
Using 2.18 Weight	800,442,277	51.1%
Difference	\$528,739,390	33.7%
% Difference	194.6%	

Element Detail 4d: Revise funding formula weight for **English Learner** students.

Design Assumptions:

1. The Commission’s preliminary report recommends increasing support for at-risk students, including special education, low-income, and EL
2. Because most of EL students also qualify for compensatory education funding, the compensatory education weight will provide for academic and social/emotional supports. Therefore, the EL weight as recommended by APA is only reflective of resources needed to specifically support language acquisition.
3. In addition to what APA recommended, the EL weight should be increased to provide a family liaison. The services that a family liaison would provide or coordinate could include: translation services for communication between school personnel and parents through a bilingual liaison, cultural competency training for school personnel, other family support and family engagement, and referrals to outside resources that a school may not be able to directly provide. A school can determine what services would best meet the needs of their students.
4. EL teachers must have specialized training, proficiency in the other language(s), and cultural competency.

Implementation Considerations:

1. The workgroup is concerned that changes at the federal level relating to immigration status of documented and undocumented students will result in an undercounting of students for compensatory education purposes. It may be necessary to adjust the EL weight to ensure that students who would otherwise qualify for compensatory education would receive the resources they need to be successful.