

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 fixed, categorical **funding amounts** for each school with concentrated poverty to be used to: 1) establish or enhance community schools and 2) establish or enhance school health and behavioral services.

Design Assumptions:

1. Achievement gaps between socioeconomic and racial populations are far too large in Maryland. Funding from the compensatory education formula and the concentration of poverty formula should be used to implement programs and provide resources that will close the achievement gap that exists between many student demographic populations.
2. 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.
3. Additional funding would be available to schools with concentrated poverty will allow Maryland to provide funds to schools with high concentrations 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.
4. This additional funding would be available to every school with a high concentration (at least X%) of students living in poverty. This percentage must be set high enough so that the students with the most need will benefit. This percentage will be set by the full commission after the full commission has determined the proxy that will be used to identify students who are at-risk of not succeeding in school.
5. A fixed amount would be provided for each school with a high concentration (at least X%) of students living in poverty. This fixed funding would be used to provide a community schools coordinator and a health services practitioner, who may work under a school health services program, school-based health center, or community-partnered school behavioral health services program. 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 identified in a school's needs assessment. This would include, but not be limited to:

- a) additional extended learning time including before and after school, summer, and extended school year;
 - b) safe transportation to school;
 - c) vision and dental care services;
 - d) additional social workers, counselors, psychologists, and restorative practice coaches;
 - e) physical wellness including providing food for in-school and out-of-school time and linkages to community providers;
 - f) behavioral health services such as mental health practitioners and providing professional development to provide trauma informed interventions;
 - g) family and community engagement and supports including informing parents of academic course offerings, of opportunities for children, and of available social services as well as educating families on how to monitor a child's learning;
 - h) linkages to Judy Centers and other early education programs that feed into the school;
 - i) student enrichment experiences;
 - j) improving student attendance;
 - k) improving the learning environment at the school; and
 - l) other professional development for teachers and school staff to quickly identify students who are in need of these resources
6. The per pupil allocation should be provided on a sliding scale based on the concentration of students living in extreme poverty so that a "cliff" effect is minimized. For illustrative purposes only, a school with 50% of students living in extreme poverty would receive a proportion of the per pupil amount whereas a school with at least 75% of students living in extreme poverty would receive the full per pupil amount.
7. Schools could use existing staff to be the community schools coordinator or the health services practitioner. This will provide more flexibility for how a school can implement this item particularly if a school already is a community school or already provides health services.
8. The State should provide the full resources for the fixed amount while the per pupil amount should be wealth equalized as are all other per pupil amounts under current law.
9. The requirement to establish a community school will be phased in as follows: 1) in year one a needs assessment will be completed and the fixed amount will be provided so that the coordinator can be hired to complete this assessment; 2) by year three all schools that qualify as a concentration of poverty school must have established a community school and the per pupil amount will be provided once the community school has been established (even if earlier than in year three). For community schools that already exist, the fixed amount and the per pupil amount will be provided in year one.

Implementation Considerations:

1. For community schools, each school or school district would submit, as part of its master plan, an implementation plan based on an assessment of need. School or district level implementation plans should include but are not limited to:
 - a) A community based needs assessment process that may be conducted in partnership with a local capacity building organization to develop an implementation strategy for addressing the needs of the students and their families, building on and strengthening community resources near the school;
 - b) Ensuring that an experienced and qualified community schools coordinator at the appropriate administrative level is hired;
 - c) Inclusion, if possible and practicable, 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 available, the need for the supports, and how to engage with the community school coordinator in accessing 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 needs and implementation 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 measures should focus on indicators identified in the master plan 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. It is important that accountability measures and data points be clearly defined and developed locally in partnership with each school district.
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.

8. The full commission is responsible for making recommendations pertaining to the State requirement that county governments maintain their effort of school funding from year-to-year and, while doing this, should take into consideration the recommendations contained in this document.

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. Federal law (IDEA) requires that schools provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students identified as having a disability. Federal law defines FAPE as the provision of special education and related services that are provided at public expense and without charge to the parent, that meet standards set by the state education agency, and that are provided in conformity with individualized education plans (IEPs) that meet the requirement of IDEA.
5. The United States Supreme Court, in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, 137 S. Ct. 988 (2017), held that FAPE must be tailored to the unique needs of a particular student and that the school system must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable a student to make progress appropriate in light of the student's circumstances. The court ruled that a student's education program must be "appropriately ambitious" in light of his or her unique circumstances. The court also held that a student's IEP must include a statement of measurable annual academic and functional goals and enable a student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. To provide special education resources, local school systems spend more than the current funding formula provides.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 allow for the provision of a family liaison or services specific to supporting families and connecting home to school. 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. It will be important to establish methods to identify low income immigrant students.