

## Fair and Equitable Public School Funding: The Work of Colorado's Superintendents

During the last year, school superintendents from across the state have been working on a new approach to how public education is funded in Colorado. This work has focused on building a student-centered funding model. This model builds upon work by Colorado School Finance Project (CSFP) to determine the cost of meeting state standards and levels of additional funding necessary to meet the needs of special education students, children living in poverty, English Language Learners (ELL), and gifted and talented students served by all school districts across the state.

The goals of the new funding model include:

- Modernizing the formula so it is reflective of the academic standards and accountability systems;
- Ensuring that all districts receive additional funding in a more fair and equitable manner;
- Creating a student centric formula utilizing additional funding, through weights, for special education, poverty, ELL, and gifted and talented students;
- Recognizing cost differences between districts related to size and cost-of-living;
- Creating a transparent model; and
- Including resource levels necessary to increase per student funding in Colorado to near the national average.

Utilizing an appropriate base in addition to the adjustments for student and district characteristics included in the model allows Colorado to reaching the national average in funding. A comparison of the current model and the proposed model can be found in the graphic included with this summary.

### What's next?

Everyone involved in this work to date understands that a policy change of this magnitude is a significant undertaking in terms of time and effort. Superintendents across the state are currently sharing their preliminary work with staff members and local boards of education. Representatives of the superintendents group have also been talking with membership organizations, various stakeholder groups, and state policy makers about their work.

The superintendents' desire is to move forward in a systematic way of (1) engaging with lawmakers at the appropriate time to implement the right funding policy, and (2) working with a wide range of stakeholders in every community across the state to address the revenue needs and funding streams necessary to ensure fair and equitable public school funding in Colorado.

# Colorado Superintendents' Proposed School Funding Formula

April 2017

## FORMULA FUNDING

Adjustments to Base	Current	Superintendent's' Proposed Formula
At Risk	Students qualifying for free lunch assigned additional funding weights from 0.12 to 0.21.	Category redefined as "Poverty." Students qualifying for either free or reduced lunch assigned additional funding weight of 0.31.
Size	Based on Student Enrollment	Based on Student Enrollment
Cost of Living	Maximum value of 18.8%	Maximum value of 5%
Negative Factor	Calculation to reduce formula calculation to balance state budget .	Not included
Gifted and Talented	Not Included in current formula. See categorical funding below.	Qualifying students assigned additional funding weight of 0.30 for small districts (below 495 students) and 0.25 for larger districts (above 1790 students).
Special Education	Not Included in current formula. See categorical funding below.	Qualifying students in Tier A and Tier B assigned additional funding weights based on tier level, size of district, and cost to serve.
English Language Learners	Not Included in current formula. See categorical funding below.	Qualifying students assigned additional funding weight of 0.59 for small districts (below 495 students) and 0.49 for larger districts (above 1790 students).
Kindergarten	Funding weight of .58	Funding weight of 1.0 for students being served in full day programs. Funding weight of 0.5 for students being served in half-day programs.
Preschool	Not included in current formula	Funding weight of 0.5 for four-year-old students.

## CATEGORICAL FUNDING

Current	Superintendents' Proposal
All special education students. Current funding is approximately 30% of costs.	Reimbursement only for high cost special education students. All other special education students included in formula above.
All English Language Learners. Current funding is approximately \$200 per qualifying student.	Reimbursement only for high cost ELL students. All other ELL students included in formula above.
All gifted and talented students. Current funding equates to approximately weight of 0.02.	Included inside formula
Transportation	Transportation
CTE	CTE
Small attendance centers	Not included