

EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA FOR MARYLAND



Article VIII, Maryland State Constitution:

“The General Assembly... shall by law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance.”

Kirwan Commission Priorities: A Focus on Equity

State resources must fully support students and districts impacted by chronic underfunding, opportunity gaps, and achievement lags.

The “thorough and efficient” funding of Maryland Public Schools is Constitutionally mandated, not a gift! In the ACLU’s 1994 case, *Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education*, the Court ruled that “adequacy” requires that every child receive the level of education they need to meet contemporary standards. This idea undergirds the current statewide education funding formula, created by the “Thornton Commission”¹ and the 2002 Bridge to Excellence Act. Now we need to take the next step.

The Thornton education formula was designed with a wealth-equity component to account for

local wealth. This means that as Maryland’s limited state resources are dispersed, the state accounts for how much each local jurisdiction can contribute.

Currently, we are working to realize a new formula, developed by the Commission on Excellence in Education, commonly referred to as the Kirwan Commission, that meets those standards but also expands on them.

The new formula must expand on and adhere to these principles. The goal is to create an education funding formula that both “adequate” and equitable.

¹ The Maryland State Commission on Finance, Equity, and Excellence, chaired by Dr. Alvin Thornton.

ADEQUACY

Every student and district receives the level of resources they need to meet state standards.

EQUITY

Counties support their schools according to what they can afford, based on local wealth, and the state makes up the difference.

To Realize Equity and Adequacy the State Must:

Reduce Or Eliminate Arbitrary Minimum Funding

- Funding “floors” increase state share of funding for wealthier counties, undermining equity.

Increase “Base” Per Student Funding Amount For All Students

- Funding should include general education costs for books, curricula, advanced programs, teachers, counselors, arts, sports, music, etc.

Increase “Weighted” Amount For:

- Students with disabilities
- English Language Learners
- Students from families with low income.
- Students living in areas with concentrated poverty.

Accurately Measure Poverty

- Use a “proxy for poverty” of **direct certification with a 1.8 multiplier** to ensure that Maryland’s formula

meticulously accounts for each student that it is designed to serve, which will provide the closest comparable overall percentage of poverty.

Provide Full-Day Pre-K For 3- And 4-Year-Olds From Families With Low Income

- Create a weight or separate formula for pre-K students.

Provide Facilities Support

- Provide additional funding to operate, maintain, and repair declining school buildings.

Ensure State Accountability

- The State is accountable to provide equitable and adequate funding to students and counties; counties and school districts are accountable to students and the State to implement high-quality programs.

KEY TERMS

• **Base/Foundation**

The amount of funding each public school student in Maryland receives, based on calculations from the Maryland Department of Education, \$7,244 for Fiscal Year 2020.

• **Weight**

A percentage of the per student base funding for high-needs programs. This amount is provided to students in eligible categories, in addition to the base funding.

• **Compensatory Aid**

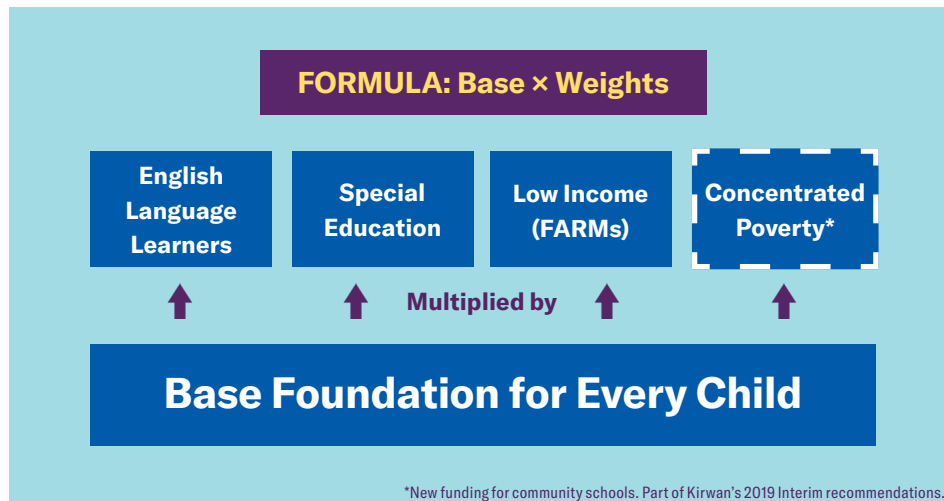
A high-needs category, defined as students eligible for free or reduced price meals, as established by the United States Department of Agriculture.

• **Multiplier**

A ratio to measure poverty. When multiplied by the number of students that receive social services (direct certification), the result will be comparable to collecting income eligibility forms.

• **Proxy for Poverty**

A value used to represent the poverty measure.



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