

Guidelines: Kansas At-Risk Pupil Assistance Program



Since 1992, the State of Kansas has provided school districts with funding specifically for students identified as at-risk. Although the amount of funding is based on the number of students eligible for free lunches as part of the national school lunch program, the intended purpose of the funding is to provide additional opportunities to help students meeting certain criteria be successful in school.

Starting in the 2017-2018 school year, districts receive an at-risk weighting of 0.484. To calculate the at-risk funding, the number of students eligible for free lunch is multiplied by 0.484 and then multiplied by the BASE. Additionally, districts with high concentrations of students living in poverty receive high density at-risk funding.

At-risk funding is restricted to approved programs and services that have shown or are likely to show positive outcomes for students identified as at-risk. Refer to KSDE's list of state at-risk approved programs/practices in 2025-2026. There are three ways a program or services can be approved. The first is the program must be on KSDE's list of approved at-risk programs. Secondly, districts may also submit a [Provisional At-Risk Program/Practice Application](#) to apply for approval of programs and services that are not included on KSDE's approved list. In the future, districts will be able to apply to continue to use programs and services that were removed from the KSDE approved list. Additional resources may be found on the [KSDE Evidence-Based Best Practices for At-Risk Programs](#) homepage.

Although there can often be confusion about what qualifies as an allowable expense for at-risk funding, the most important consideration is what programs and services do students who are identified as at-risk need to be successful in school. While this guide provides answers to frequently asked questions, the success of at-risk students must be the primary focus.

Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, all districts will be required to complete an **At-Risk Accountability Plan** which will include rationale for at-risk expenditures and improvement plans for specific cohorts of students. Select districts began a pilot program in the fall of 2024 and KSDE will continue to provide updates as the process evolves.



"The success of at-risk students must be the primary focus."

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**Reporting requirements will change in 2026*

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.



1. What is the purpose of the Kansas At-Risk Pupil Assistance program?

The purpose of the at-risk student weighting and the high-density at-risk student weighting is to provide students identified as eligible to receive at-risk programs and services with additional educational opportunities, interventions and evidence-based instructional services above and beyond regular educational services to assist in meeting State Board of Education outcomes.

2. What does the term “additional educational opportunities” mean?

Additional services for At-Risk students are defined as being **above and beyond regular educational services**. Above and beyond is defined as education programs or evidence-based instruction or practice that is provided in excess to regular education services and based on the needs of students identified as eligible to receive at-risk services. These services can provide collateral benefit to students not identified as at-risk as long as there is not an additional cost.

K.S.A 72-5153(c) Expenditures from the at-risk educational fund of a school district shall only be made for the following purposes:

- (1) At-risk and provisional at-risk educational programs that are provided above and beyond regular educational services to students who are identified as at-risk;
- (2) personnel providing educational services in conjunction with such programs;
- (3) support for instructional classroom personnel designed to provide training for evidence-based best practices for at-risk educational programs; or
- (4) services contracted for by the school district to provide such at-risk and provisional at-risk educational programs.

For more information: [Evidence-Based Best Practices homepage](#)

3. What is “collateral benefit” and what does “no additional cost” mean?

The concept of **collateral benefit** means that students may be positively impacted by an education program even when they may not be the intended audience. In this case, students who are not identified as at-risk may participate in programs and services paid for from at-risk funds as long as there is **no additional cost** to provide the program.

For example:

- a. If an approved at-risk program requires a per pupil license, at-risk funds can only be used for the licenses used by students who identified as at-risk.
- b. Other funding would have to be used for licenses used by students who are not identified as at-risk.
- c. However, if the cost of an approved at-risk program is not determined by the students using the program, at-risk funds may be used and students not identified as at-risk may still participate in the program.

**4. Does an at-risk student have to be a free-lunch student?**

No, the number of free lunch eligible students determines the amount of at-risk funding while the needs of students identified as at-risk determine how at-risk funds should be spent.

5. What is the definition of an at-risk student and what criteria identify an at-risk student?

At-risk students can meet one or more criteria. A student who is not working on grade level in either reading or mathematics should be the predominant criteria used.

An at-risk student is one who meets one or more of the following criteria (a-l):

- a. Is not working on academic grade level
- b. Is not meeting the requirements necessary for promotion to the next grade or is failing subjects or courses of study
- c. Is not meeting the requirements necessary for graduation from high school or has the potential to drop out of school
- d. Has insufficient mastery of skills or is not meeting state standards
- e. Has been retained
- f. Has a high rate of absenteeism
- g. Has repeated suspensions or expulsions from school
- h. Is homeless and/or migrant
- i. Is identified as an English Language Learner
- j. Has social emotional needs that cause the student to be unsuccessful in school
- k. Is identified as a student with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia
- l. A student in foster care or otherwise in the custody of the secretary of the department for children and families (DCF).

Students are often at-risk as a result of the following situations:

- Low attachment to or involvement with school
- Continual or persistently inappropriate behavior
- Repeated discipline infractions
- A high rate of transition or mobility
- Living in an environment of poverty
- Living in an environment of limited educational achievement
- Has a drug or alcohol problem
- Is pregnant or is a parent, or both
- Participants in gang or gang-like activity
- Is adjudicated as a juvenile offender
- Is a "child in need of care" (CINC)

6. May students identified for special education services receive at-risk services?

Yes, students with disabilities may be served by the at-risk funds if the services are not the same area of service being provided by special education funds as identified on the student's IEP.

For example, a student with a disability receiving special education instructional support in the area of reading could receive at-risk instructional support in the area of mathematics, but not in reading.

7. What information should districts use to identify at-risk students?

Districts are to use some form of diagnostic assessment and/or evidence-based educational criteria to identify students who are at-risk to determine their needs and to guide their interventions.

**8. What assessments or data can be used to identify at-risk students?**

Some examples of data and assessments that can be used to identify at-risk students eligible to receive services include:

- a. Records of performance demonstrating a lack of growth
- b. Student records including attendance records, disciplinary reports, or other information that supports another identification criteria
- c. State assessment results
- d. Local assessments
- e. Performance based assessments
- f. Norm referenced assessments
- g. Screening assessments
- h. Diagnostic assessments such as:
 - Qualitative Reading Inventory
 - Degrees of Reading Power
 - Gates MacGinitie
- i. Supplemental services needed through the school day

9. What are some examples of how at-risk services can be provided to students?

The primary means of providing additional services that are above and beyond what is offered to all students primarily includes additional time or additional staff hired specifically to work with identified at-risk students.

Some appropriate examples of how at-risk services can be delivered are:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Extended year | e. Extra support within a class |
| b. Before school | f. Tutorial assistance |
| c. After school | g. Class within a class |
| d. Summer school | |

10. May alternative, virtual and charter schools be funded with at-risk funds?

Yes, alternative, virtual, and charter schools can use at-risk funding to provide educational services to identified at-risk students.

11. May at-risk funds be used to fund an instructional coach for PreK-12?

Yes, at-risk funds may be used to hire instructional coaches who work with teachers of at-risk students in grades preK-12.

12. How may at-risk funds be used to support direct instruction?

Funds used to support direct instructional services provided to at-risk students includes the hiring of teachers or paraprofessionals (who are appropriately supervised by licensed staff) to offer additional services to at-risk students.

**13. May at-risk funds be used to support administrative salaries?**

In general, at-risk funds cannot be used to support administrative salaries unless the administrator is providing direct instructional services and/or support services to identified at-risk students and those duties are beyond their regular contract duties. However, if an administrator is fully employed to serve a school that has 100% of its students identified as at-risk based on the at-risk criteria in question #4, at-risk funds can be used to support the administrator's salary. An alternative school is an example in which this situation might apply.

14. May at-risk funds be used to support classroom teacher salaries?

In some cases, at-risk funds may be used for a proportion of a classroom teacher's salary. The proportion of a classroom teacher's salary that may be paid from at-risk funding must be equal to or lower than the proportion of time the teacher is providing evidence-based best practices to support students identified as eligible for at-risk services. NOTE: An Excel worksheet was developed to help a district calculate the allowable time of the classroom teacher's salary. It is available on KSDE's [Fiscal Auditing](#) and School Finance webpages.

15. May at-risk funds be used to support social workers, counselors, or translators' salaries?

At-risk funds can be used to support social workers, counselors, or translators' salaries if they are providing direct services to support students identified as eligible for at-risk services. The support services provided should directly impact the reason(s) for which the student was identified as at-risk.

16. May at-risk funds be used to support school resource officer's salaries?

No. At-risk funds cannot be used to support school resource officer's salaries.

17. May at-risk funds be used to support clerical staff salaries?

No. While clerical staff provide invaluable services and support, they do not provide direct instructional services with evidence-based practices.

18. May funds be used to support professional development activities?

At-risk funds may be used to provide training for approved evidence-based best practices for at-risk educational programs.

19. May at-risk funds be used to purchase software, materials, and equipment?

- a. At-risk funds may be used to purchase software and materials required to implement approved evidence-based best practices for at-risk educational programs.
- b. Equipment required to implement approved evidence-based best practices for at-risk educational programs may also use at-risk funds; however, equipment purchases should be limited to 25% or less of the total at-risk allocation.

20. May at-risk funds be used to provide services for pre-school aged at-risk students?

Yes.

**21. May at-risk funds be spent on transportation?**

Yes, funds may only be used to pay for transportation for at-risk students attending after school programs, extended school or summer school.

22. How must high-density at-risk funds be spent?

School districts receiving high-density at-risk weighting must spend this additional state at-risk funding on at-risk evidence-based best practices approved by the State Board of Education in accordance [K.S.A. 72-5151](#). School districts must also maintain records on high-density at-risk expenditures.

23. What student records must be kept for the at-risk program?

Annual records must be kept at the district on the following:

- a. list of students **qualified to receive** at-risk services;
- b. list of students **receiving** at-risk services; and
- c. student **information used to identify students** as at-risk and the **specific selection criteria**.

24. What information must districts report at the end of the year related to at-risk?

As required by the state's school finance law, districts must report annually on the following information:

- a. The **number of pupils identified as eligible** to receive at-risk services;
- b. The **number of at-risk pupils served** or assistance provided;
- c. The **type of service(s)** provided;
- d. The research (e.g., **student assessment data**) upon which the district relied in determining the need existed to provide the service(s) or assistance;
- e. The results (e.g., **student impact data**) of the service(s) or assistance provided.

New At-Risk Reporting Requirements

- District reporting requirements will change beginning in the 2026-27 school year to comply with 2024 amendments to state law.
- A two-year pilot program with select districts began in the fall of 2024.
- KSDE will continue to provide updates as the process evolves.



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