

Section 31a At-Risk Funding: Methodology and Transparency Report

Executive Summary

In accordance with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) guidelines, this document outlines the strategic methodology for the allocation and expenditure of Section 31a At-Risk funds. Our district is committed to utilizing these resources to ensure that all students, particularly those identified as at-risk, meet the state's academic standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. This report serves to provide transparency to the State of Michigan and our parent community regarding our data-driven decision-making process.

1. Prioritization of ELA and Math Intervention

The primary objective of Section 31a funding is to ensure students are proficient in ELA by the end of 3rd grade and proficient in Mathematics by the end of 8th grade, while also ensuring high school students are career and college ready.

Rationale for Intervention Focus

- **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy:** Research indicates that students who do not reach proficiency in reading and math in early grades face increasing challenges in all subject areas. By dedicating funds to specialized interventionists and evidence-based programs, we aim to close the achievement gap early.
- **Data-Driven Support:** We utilize Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to identify students who require Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Section 31a funds provide the additional instructional time and specialized personnel necessary to support these students without replacing general education services.

Credit Recovery for Secondary Students

To ensure all students reach the goal of high school graduation, a portion of Section 31a funds is allocated to credit recovery programs. These programs provide a vital safety net for students who have fallen behind, offering flexible learning environments and targeted instruction to help them regain academic standing and stay on track for graduation.

2. Tiered Allocation: The "Early Intervention" Model

Stakeholders may notice a higher concentration of Section 31a funds at the elementary and middle school levels compared to the high school level. This is a deliberate, strategic choice based on the following principles:

- **Prevention vs. Remediation:** It is more effective and fiscally responsible to intervene early. By investing heavily in the lower levels, we aim to reduce the long-term need for intensive remediation in later years.
- **State Benchmarks:** MDE emphasizes third-grade reading and middle school math proficiency. Aligning our heaviest spending with these critical developmental windows ensures we meet state accountability standards.
- **Building Capacity:** Strengthening the foundational skills of our youngest learners creates a sustainable path toward academic success as they transition into the more complex curriculum of high school.

3. Professional Development and Capacity Building

Section 31a funds are utilized to provide high-quality professional development (PD) for staff. This spending is strictly aligned with the MDE allowable use categories to ensure that our educators are equipped with the most effective strategies for supporting at-risk populations.

- **Instructional Best Practices:** PD focuses on differentiated instruction, trauma-informed teaching, and the implementation of the MTSS framework.
- **Compliance and Strategy:** Training is provided to administrative and instructional staff to ensure a deep understanding of the 31a "Use of Funds" categories, ensuring every dollar spent directly impacts student outcomes and adheres to state law.

4. Instructional Materials and Allowable Uses

Beyond personnel and training, Section 31a funds are used to procure specific materials that support the identified needs of at-risk students. All purchases fall within the MDE allowable use guidelines, including:

- **Supplemental Resources:** Purchase of specialized reading and math materials that go above and beyond the standard curriculum provided to all students.
- **Technology for Intervention:** Hardware and software specifically designated for use in credit recovery labs or by intervention specialists to track student progress.
- **Support Services:** Materials required for social-emotional learning (SEL) and behavioral supports, which are often prerequisites for academic engagement.