

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 meals 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 2024-2025. 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, there will be a third process in which 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 will start a pilot program in 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.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Purpose of the Kansas A-Risk Pupil Assistance program | 13. Support administrative salaries |
| 2. Define additional educational opportunities | 14. Support classroom teacher salaries (prorated) |
| 3. Collateral benefit and no additional cost; expenditures | 15. Support social workers, counselors, or translators’ salaries |
| 4. Free-lunch students | 16. Support School Resource Officer’s salaries (no) |
| 5. Definition and list of criteria to identify an at-risk student | 17. Support Clerical Staff salaries (no) |
| 6. Students with disabilities, special education, IEP | 18. Support Professional Development activities |
| 7. Student data/records used to identify at-risk students | 19. Purchase of software, materials and equipment |
| 8. Examples of how services can be provided to at-risk students | 20. Provide services for pre-school aged students |
| 9. Alternative, virtual and charter schools | 21. Pay for transportation of at-risk students |
| 10. Splitting at-risk expenditures between funds | 22. High-density at-risk funds |
| 11. Instructional coach for PreK-12 teachers | 23. Annual student records for at-risk program |
| 12. Support direct instructional services (teachers/paras) | 24. End of year reporting for at-risk pupils and services* |

**Reporting requirements will change in 2026 – Sub SB 387*



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.

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.

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 are 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.

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

- a. at-risk educational programs based on evidence-based best practices identified by the State Board of Education;
- b. educational programs or services approved for the district’s use by the State Board of Education as a provisional at-risk program;
- c. personnel providing educational services in conjunction with such programs; or
- d. services contracted by the school district to provide at-risk educational programs based on best practices.

More information: *Evidence-Based Best Practices* homepage: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=748>



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; is failing subjects or courses of study
- c. Is not meeting the requirements necessary for graduation from high school. (e.g., potential dropout)
- 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).

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 should use the most appropriate and available student information to determine whether a student meets one or more of the at-risk qualifying criteria. Keep in mind, *appropriate information will vary by at-risk qualifying criteria* and will depend on the *student data available*. Examples of student data that may be used to determine whether a student should receive at-risk services include:

- a. **student records** including attendance, grades/credits earned, counselor visits, nurse visits, and behavior referrals;
- b. **assessment results** including screeners, diagnostic, formative and summative;
- c. **support services received** including bilingual, homeless, migrant, and counseling.



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

Primarily, providing additional services that are above and beyond what are offered to all students includes (a) providing additional time or (b) additional staff hired specifically to provide services for at-risk students.

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

At-risk funding may be used to provide other educational settings for students identified as at-risk. However, it is important to keep in mind there are already existing funding streams as well as specific requirements related to providing alternative school services or virtual education services.

- Alternative learning services are provided on-site, students attend in-person, and services are provided on-site by a licensed teacher or teachers.
- A virtual school or program that is available to all students as their regular education setting would not be considered “above and beyond” and is not an appropriate use of state at-risk funding.

10. Can at-risk funds be blended with other funds to split the cost of staff or program costs?

Yes, at-risk funds can be used to fund a portion of an allowable at-risk expense while other funding picks up the rest of the cost. One example would be MHIT. Grants received by MHIT districts are equal to the cost of the MHIT Liaison, but districts may only keep 65% of these funds. Assuming that the MHIT Liaison is serving students who are identified as at-risk, the district could charge 35% of the MHIT Liaison’s salary to the at-risk fund.

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 for the implementation of approved at-risk programs or services.

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:** A calculator is being developed to help a district calculate the allowable time of the classroom teacher's salary. It will be available on KSDE's [Fiscal Auditing](#) and School Finance webpages prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year.

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. However, in the case of Parents as Teachers (PAT), the district's required match must be expended from the PAT fund, and it is not allowable to transfer funds from the at-risk fund to the PAT fund. If a district has PAT expenses above the required match, these expenses could be coded to the at-risk fund.

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 (*K.S.A. 72-5151*). However, high-density at-risk funds may provide collateral benefit for students not identified as at-risk.

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 receiving at-risk services; and
- b. student information used to identify students as at-risk and the specific selection criteria.

Link to **Evidence-Based Best Practices** homepage: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=748>

24. What information on at-risk must districts report at the end of each school year?

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

- a. The **number of at-risk pupils** served or assistance provided;
- b. The **type of service(s)** provided;
- c. The research (e.g., **student assessment data**) upon which the district relied in determining the need existed to provide the service(s) or assistance;
- d. The results (e.g., **student impact data**) of the service(s) or assistance provided;
- e. Any other information required by the State Board of Education.

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 will begin in the fall of 2024.
- KSDE will continue to provide updates as the process evolves.

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