

# Weighted student funding to promote equity

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# Two examples of formula funding with student weights for disadvantaged students.

- The Netherlands: National government funding for individual elementary schools
- California: State funding for districts

# The Netherlands

- Background

Before 1917. Three types of schools: Protestant, Catholic, and secular. Only the secular schools were publicly funded.

Constitutional amendment in 1917. All schools publicly funded, with equal per pupil funding for all (and full freedom of parental choice).

Goal at that time. **Equal school quality** for all students, regardless of their religious background. Logic. No group viewed as superior and all three groups had students with different economic backgrounds. Therefore, no reason to differentiate the funding.

# 1987 introduction of weighted student funding

1987 revision of funding formula to include weights

Why? Influx of low skilled and low educated immigrants from Morocco and Turkey. Concentrated in cities and in some schools.

Logic. Schools with concentrations of immigrants need more teachers and adults than other schools. Hence, equal funding no longer generated equal school quality.

## Formula and goal

New formula: Base per pupil amount

plus 90 percent more for immigrants with low educated parents,  
and 25 percent more for native Dutch children with low educated  
parents,

only schools with more than 9 percent of disadvantaged children.

Note. Additional funding did not have to be used for the weighted  
students. The goal remained: [Equal quality schools for all students.](#)

# Impacts

- Many more adults in schools with concentrations of disadvantaged students - 60 percent more teachers per student plus other staff
- Inspectorate ratings suggest that the additional funding helped improve processes within the schools
- Concern that some local municipal governments might counter the additional funding by cutting their own (very limited) funding, but little or no evidence of that.
- Did not reduce segregation of immigrants, as some people hoped it might.

# Other issues

- Change in formula in 2006; immigrant status removed, new weights based only on education level of the parents.
- Parental education level conceptually a good measure, but increasingly hard to get valid information.

Why possible in the Netherlands?

Very centralized funding system

Continuity from one administration to another

Strong egalitarian values

# California. Weighted student funding – state funding for local districts

- Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) introduced in 2013
- Background

Before 2013, state aid to districts primarily in the form of categorical grants, that is grants that were restricted to specific purposes, such as professional development or needy students.

Very little flexibility at the district level over use of funds.

Concerns about inefficient use of funds, in part because of variation in needs across districts.

# New policy in 2013

- Most categorical grants eliminated and consolidated into a single grant for each district.
- Formula
  - Base amount per student, with some variation by grade level of the students (more for grades K-3 and for high school grades)
  - 20 percent more for students
    - who are English language learners
    - who come from low income families.
    - who live in foster homes.
  - Concentration factor. 50% more funding for pupils when more than 55 percent of the students are disadvantaged.
- 32% increase in state funding because of booming economy

# Associated Governance Changes

## Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

Requires meaningful parental and stakeholder engagement around 8 state priorities –

Examples: Student achievement, access to courses, parental involvement, school climate.

Expanded role for county offices of education (COE)

Plans for intervention and support for weak districts

# Effects – but quite early

## Opinions.

Superintendents like the new flexibility

But do not like being expected to spend the supplements primarily on the defined group of disadvantaged students

## Empirical evidence

- No evidence to date of major changes in how money is allocated
- Mixed results on the distribution of funds to high and low poverty schools (but weak data).
- Some initial, but only suggestive, evidence that the shift to WSF made state aid more productive.
- Policy rec. require district to provide more information about how funds are distributed to individual schools.

# Final points

- Governance provisions are a work in progress
  - Tension between state funding and local control
- Concern about overall adequacy of the funds
  - Spending pressures from pensions, health care, and special education