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Professional Judgement Study Report Summary

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Summary of Findings from 2015 Professional Judgment Study in Nevada

This brief summarizes the Professional Judgment (PJ) Study conducted by Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA) for the Lincy Institute at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). The study is an update of the PJ approach component of the 2006 Nevada Adequacy Study, with an emphasis on addressing the resources needed to serve English Language Learner (ELL) students.

The PJ approach relies on two assumptions: (1) that experienced educators can specify the resources—including personnel, additional supports and services, non-personnel costs, and technology—needed in representative schools and school districts to meet state standards; and (2) that the costs of such resources can be determined by applying salary, benefits, and technology hardware prices, to those resources. These resources are first identified for students with no identified special needs in districts with no special circumstances, which allows for the calculation of a “base cost.” The PJ approach then identifies the resources above and beyond the base resources needed to serve students with additional, identified needs which are then represented as a series of “weights,” relative to base cost.

For this study, APA conducted three school-level panels, one ELL panel, and one statewide review panel with over 30 Nevada educators to update the PJ base cost and ELL weight. APA also reviewed the at-risk and special education weights, as well as the district size and cost of living adjustments from the 2006 Study to evaluate their continued appropriateness.

The results of the study include several key resources that were recommended to ensure all students could receive an adequate education:

- Small class sizes: 15:1 for K-3rd grade, 25:1 for 4th-12th grade;
- Professional development and instructional coaches for teachers;
- Student support (counselors and social workers);
- Technology rich learning environments with one-to-one student devices and IT support; and
- Preschool, recommended for all four-year-olds.

Panels also recommended the additional resources needed to serve three categories of ELL students, aligned with WIDA proficiency standards: L1 (Entering) and L2 (Beginning) students; L3 (Developing) and L4 (Expanding) students; and L5 (Bridging) students and “Monitoring” students who have transitioned out of levels 1-5, but still require monitoring (including L6 students). These resources included:

- A multi-faceted approach to ELL education to ensure that the education of ELL students is a responsibility shared among staff, including: ELL teachers for direct instruction and/or co-teaching, instructional coaches to provide all teachers with guidance on ELL instruction, interventionists to work one-on-one with students, as well as social workers, family liaisons, and (at the high school level) counselors to provide pupil support;
- A focus on addressing the need of “long-term” ELL students who often stay in the L3-L4 category;

- Ongoing monitoring support for students who have transitioned out of the L1-L5 categories, to ensure their success; and
- Extended day opportunities and summer school for L1-L4 ELL students.

APA then reviewed the special education weights and at-risk weights from the 2006 Nevada adequacy study and compared them against weights from the last 10 years of adequacy studies in CO, CT, KY, MN, MT, PA, SD, TN, and D.C. In both cases, the Nevada-specific figure was within the national weight range, so APA felt it was appropriate to continue to use the 2006 weights. The 2006 size adjustment was also evaluated and determined to be appropriate for continued use. The 2006 cost of living adjustment (termed the location cost metric, or LCM) is recommended to be used cautiously, as figures have likely changed based upon current economic realities.

Base Cost, Weights, and Additional Adjustments for Modeling Statewide Adequacy Costs

Base Cost, Size Adjusted Minimum	\$8,251
Weights	
ELL	0.42
At- Risk	0.35
Special Education	1.10
Additional Adjustments	
Size	<p><i>Less than 780 students</i> Students X (-0.0008789) +2.311 <i>781 – 6,500 students</i> (Students X (-0.0000868+1.6938 <i>More than 6,500 students</i> (Students X (-0.00002067)) +1.1429 <i>No district would have a size factor below 1.0</i></p>
LCM	83.2- 104.7

Applying these weights and adjustments to the 17 non-charter school districts in Nevada produced the following total cost of adequacy figures for 2012-13:

Total Cost of Adequacy in Nevada Districts, 2012-13

Size Adjusted Base	\$3,595,832,307
At-Risk	\$652,548,881
ELL	\$236,309,902
Special Education	\$448,834,516
Total	
-Without LCM	\$4,933,525,606
-With LCM	\$4,927,768,519

Total adequacy costs, without LCM, were than compared against the 2012-13 expenditures-excluding capital, transportation and food service. *Figures presented do not include preschool.*

Total Cost of Adequacy Compared to Actual Expenditures in Nevada Districts, 2012-13

District	Current Expenditures	Current Per Pupil	Adequacy Total	Adequacy Per Pupil	Difference	Difference Per Pupil
TOTAL	\$3,303,731,046	\$7,809	\$4,933,525,606	\$11,661	\$1,629,794,560	\$3,852

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