

NOAH WEBSTER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION MODEL POLICY

TO: TBD
FROM: Noah Webster Educational Foundation
RE: Budgeting Needs Assessment Policy
DATE: TBD

This model policy aims to improve the quality of the programs and resources schools offer. By conducting a yearly needs assessment, school districts can better understand what programs and resources are effective and plan their budget accordingly.

Budget Needs Assessment Policy

· Noah Webster Educational Foundation

BACKGROUND: School Districts have the responsibility of developing an appropriate district-wide budget that supports programs and resources within the school system to improve student outcomes. Needs assessments effectively gauge the needs of schools within the district and assess the results of programs and resources over time. This policy aims to improve programs and resources in public schools by requiring needs assessments. Needs assessments are considered best practice among education professionals and are generally recommended by the U.S. Department of Education to improve educational programs and resources. This model policy corresponds directly to NWEF's '[Diagnosing Waste in Your District's Budget](#)' training series.

LEGAL ADVISORY: Noah Webster Educational Foundation is not a law firm, and it does not claim any legal expertise. Please consult with your school district's attorney and state laws and codes when evaluating model policies from Noah Webster Educational Foundation.

Subject: Budgeting Needs Assessment Policy

I. Definitions

All Definitions in this policy that are listed below are taken directly from the Needs Assessment Guidebook developed by the State Support Network by contract under the U.S. Department of Education.¹

A. Input Data: information related to improvement plans, curriculum materials and supplies, training, resource allocation, and intervention programs.

B. Output Data: information that demonstrates the outcomes or results, including student and teacher attendance, student achievement, program reviews, classroom observations, behavior referrals, and other similar information.

C. Demographic or Community Context Data: information regarding contextual factors that the school may not be able to change, but could affect the implementation of policies and interventions such as student subgroup populations/demographics, local economic trends, student mobility, and overall enrollment patterns

II. Description of Policy

This School Board/School Division, as required by the state and federal government for the benefit and education of students, is required to develop and submit a budget to determine the allotment of funding and resources to different programs in its schools. To provide context for how much of the budget each program, resource, and activity should receive, schools within this district will undergo a needs assessment. This policy outlines the appropriate timeline and framework that should be used to perform a needs assessment in accordance with established best practices.

A. School boards have an obligation to all stakeholders (parents, students, and the local community) to responsibly allocate funds to programs and resources that are appropriate for and benefit the specific needs of schools within the district.

B. While conducting needs assessments, school districts should be informed by best practices and involve all relevant stakeholders in the process to ensure the well-being, benefit, and appropriate instruction of students.

III. Performance of Needs Assessments

This School District should conduct needs assessments annually to allocate funds effectively to improve the educational programs and resources offered by the school. The district should send a yearly notification to inform parents that it will conduct needs assessments, provide transparency, and allow parents to opt their student out of appropriate portions of the needs assessment, such as those associated with mental health programs. The needs assessment should be thorough and

¹ Cary Cuiccio and Marie Husby-Slater, *Needs Assessment Guidebook*, State Support Network, May 2018, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/10/needsassessmentguidebook-508_003.pdf

specific, following the guidelines provided by this policy and informed by generally accepted best practices.

IV. Framework for Administering Needs Assessments

School board members should follow a needs assessment process that meets the requirements of this outline, developed with guidance from the U.S. Department of Education to ensure clear standards. Per these sources, this school district will make sure the following guidelines are met when conducting a needs assessment:

- A. The school district will notify parents when conducting a needs assessment in accordance with the Protection of Pupil Rights Act (PPRA).²
- B. All needs assessments must be context-specific, reflecting the needs, challenges, and gaps in the local community. To ensure needs assessments are context-specific, a diverse group of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members) should be engaged and consulted throughout the process, as appropriate. Appropriate times to engage stakeholders include planning, data collection, and needs identification. Organizational challenges and initiative implementations should also be thoroughly considered.³
- C. Needs assessments should use rigorous data analysis and collection methods. These methods include input data, output data, and demographic/community context data.⁴

School board members will use the provided information to conduct a needs assessment, including planning, data collection/implementation, interpretation of information, prioritization, and implementation.

V. Implementing Administrative Changes Informed by Needs Assessments

School board members and the superintendent will investigate and assess growth rates for teachers, students, and administration comparatively as part of the needs assessment to inform budgeting needs.

- A. Student and teacher growth rates should be proportionate to, or higher than, administrative growth rates within the district to ensure necessary programs and resources are implemented effectively and receive proper funding allocations.

² The Protection of Pupils Rights Amendment can be found in the US Code as: 20 U.S. Code § 1232h. The full text of this policy can be found here:
[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:20%20section:1232h%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:20%20section:1232h%20edition:prelim))

³ Cary Cuiccio and Marie Husby-Slater, *Needs Assessment Guidebook*, State Support Network, May 2018, pg. 5-6, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/10/needsassessmentguidebook-508_003.pdf.

⁴ Ibid, 6.

- B. If administrative growth rates exceed teacher and student growth rates, the district should reduce administrative burden, expand the budget, and/or distribute workloads more proportionately.

VI. Maintenance of Records

All information and records of social/emotional counseling are to be kept confidential and separate from the student's educational records and may not be disclosed to any third party without prior written parental/guardian consent or as otherwise provided by law.