



# Fact Sheet

## COUNTING STUDENTS FOR PURPOSES OF K-12 FUNDING

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Each state must have a system to determine how it will count students for purposes of allocating funding to school districts. As reported by the Education Commission of the States, the various counting systems used by the states have their positives and negatives. The following represent the major categories of counting mechanisms:

**SINGLE DAY COUNTS:** Students are counted on a single day each year. This is the system used in Nevada.

***Positives:*** Easy to administer.

***Negatives:*** Potential for unwarranted district penalties or rewards. For example, if students are not in attendance for that single day, the school district does not receive funding from the state. Moreover, if students transfer out during the year, districts continue to receive full funding for those students and there is no financial incentive to retain students after count day.

**MULTIPLE SINGLE-COUNT DAYS:** Students are counted on a single day during multiple times throughout the year, often one day in the fall and one day in the spring. The state then funds the average of these counts.

***Positives:*** Relatively easy to administer; this approach attempts to take into account shifting student populations.

***Negatives:*** Places pressure on districts to have students attend on the count days; districts lose an incentive to ensure students attend on other dates.

**AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP:** Students are counted for funding purposes if they are enrolled in the district for all, or in some cases, almost all of the school year.

***Positives:*** Takes into account student enrollment during the whole school year.

***Negatives:*** This system counts all students who are enrolled in the districts—not necessarily those students who actually attend classes on a daily basis—which eliminates financial incentives for encouraging students to attend school.

**AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is taken each day, or in some states on the majority of school days, and the district's annual student count is the average of these daily attendance numbers. Most states that use this system have some provisions to account for excused absences, such as for student illnesses.

**Positives:** The most accurate way to measure student attendance.

**Negatives:** Many state and/or district data systems might not be capable of capturing daily student counts.

**COUNTING PERIODS:** Students are counted during longer or multiple periods during the school year. Alabama, for example, counts students during the first 20 days after Labor Day. Only Florida uses multiple count periods, averaging a multi-day count from two or more periods during the school year.

**Positives:** Provides a clearer picture of student attendance than single-day count systems.

**Negatives:** Statewide counting periods might not align with shifts in student populations that occur in certain districts. For instance, the timing of the counting period might not take into account students who migrate to new communities during a farming season.

Source: *Understanding State School Funding*, Education Commission of the States, June 2012.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT COUNT MECHANISMS BY STATE*		
STUDENT COUNT MECHANISM	NUMBER OF STATES**	STATES
Single Day Counts	10	Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, South Dakota
Multiple Single-Count Days	9	Arizona (Fiscal Year 2013), Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Wisconsin
Average Daily Membership	14	Arkansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wyoming
Average Daily Attendance	7	California, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Texas
Single Count Period	3	Alabama, Alaska, Ohio
Multiple Count Periods	1	Florida

\*Source: *Student Count Mechanisms for Funding Purposes*, Education Policy Brief, Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, Spring 2012.

\*\*Note: Forty-four states responded as of January 2012.