

Glossary of Common School Finance Terms

ADA Average daily attendance. There are several kinds of attendance, and these are counted in different ways. For regular attendance, ADA is equal to the average number of pupils actually attending classes who are enrolled for at least the minimum school day. Up through 1997-98, ADA included excused absences but, effective 1998-99, excused absences no longer count towards ADA. In classes for adults and ROC/P, one unit of ADA is credited for each 525 classroom hours. Attendance is counted every day of the school year and is reported to the California Department of Education three times a year.

AB 1200 Reference to AB 1200 (Chapter 1213/1991) that imposed major fiscal accountability controls on school districts and county offices of education, by establishing significant administrative hurdles and obligations for agency budgets and fiscal practices. See especially Education Code Sections 1240 et seq. and 42131 et seq.

Accrual Basis Accounting An accounting system where transactions are recorded when they have been reduced to a legal or contractual right or obligation to receive or pay out cash or other resources.

Ad valorem Taxes Taxes that are based on the value of property, such as the standard property tax. The only new taxes based on the value of property that are allowed today are those imposed with a two-thirds voter approval for capital facilities bonded indebtedness.

Apportionment State aid given to a school district or county office of education. Apportionments are calculated three times for each school year: (1) the First Principal Apportionment (P-1) is calculated in February of the school year corresponding to the P-1 ADA (see Attendance Reports); (2) the Second Principal Apportionment (P-2) is calculated in June corresponding to the P-2 ADA; and, (3) the annual recalculation of the apportionment is made in February following the school year and is based on P-2 ADA (except for programs where the annual count of ADA is used).

Appropriation Bill A bill before the Legislature authorizing the expenditure of public money and stipulating the amount, manner and purpose for the expenditure items.

Appropriation For Contingencies That portion of the current fiscal year's budget that is not appropriated for any specific purpose but is held subject to intrabudget transfer; i.e. transfer to other specific appropriation accounts as needed during the fiscal year.

Assessed Valuation (also, Assessed Value) The total value of property for taxation purposes within a school agency, as determined by state and county assessors. The "AV" of a school district will influence the total property tax income of a school district. The percentage growth in statewide AV from one year to the next is an important ingredient in determining appropriations levels required from the state for fully funding district and county revenue limits, as well as for Proposition 98 calculations. Ever since Proposition 13, the assessed value of properties in California are adjusted to the true market value only at the time of new construction or transfer of ownership. For all other properties, the assessed value grows by a maximum of 2% a year, resulting in the assessed value of many properties being far less than their current market value.

Attendance Reports Each school agency reports its attendance three times during a school year. The First Principal Apportionment ADA, called the P-1 ADA or the P-1 count, is counted from July 1 through the last school month ending on or before December 31 of a school year. The Second Principal Apportionment ADA, called the P-2 ADA, is counted from July 1 through the last school month ending on or before April 15 of a school year. Annual ADA is based on the count from July 1 through June 30. The final recalculation of the apportionment is based on a school agency's P-2 ADA, except for adult education programs, regional occupational centers and programs and nonpublic school funding, all of which use the annual count of ADA. Also, under certain circumstances when a district has a very large influx of migrant students in the Spring, a district may request the use of annual ADA in lieu of P-2 ADA.

Base Revenue Limit See Revenue Limit.

Basic Aid The California Constitution guarantees that each school district will receive a minimum amount of state aid, called "basic aid," equal to \$120 per ADA or \$2,400 per district, whichever is greater. "Basic aid school districts" are those eligible for the basic aid constitutional guarantee only, since all of the balance of the school districts' revenue limit is funded by local property taxes.

Benefit Assessment Districts See Maintenance Assessment Districts.

Bonded Indebtedness An obligation incurred by the sale of bonds for acquisition of school facilities or other capital expenditures. Since 1986, districts have been able to levy a local property tax to amortize bonded indebtedness, provided the taxes are approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate.

Categorical Aid Funds from the state or federal government granted to qualifying school agencies for specialized programs regulated and controlled by federal or state law or regulation. Examples include programs for children with special needs, such as special education and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE); special programs, such as the School Improvement Program (SIP); or, special purposes, such as transportation. Expenditure of most categorical aid is restricted to its particular purpose. The funds are granted to districts in addition to their revenue limits.

CBEDS California Basic Education Data System. The statewide system of collecting enrollment, staffing and salary data from all school districts on an "Information Day" each October.

CBEST The California Basic Education Skills Test. Required of anyone seeking certification as a teacher, the test measures proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics.

Certificated Personnel School employees who hold positions for which a credential is required by the state – teachers, librarians, counselors and most administrators.

Chapter 1 Federal financial assistance to districts to meet the special needs of educationally deprived children, i.e. children whose educational attainment is below the level appropriate for children of their age. Funding is to supplement services in reading, language arts and mathematics to identified students.

Chapter 2 Federal financial assistance for schools under the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 3811 et seq., which consolidated the provisions of Titles II, III, IV, VI, VII and part IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The law provides federal grants to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated program to improve elementary and secondary instruction in basic skills of reading, math and language arts, as formerly authorized in Title II.

Classified Personnel School employees who hold positions that do not require a credential, like aides, custodians, clerical support, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc.

Class Size Penalties The penalties imposed on school districts that have classes in excess of certain maximum sizes. Class size penalties result in a reduction in ADA which, in turn, results in a loss in revenue limit income. (See Education Code Sections 41376 and 41378).

Concurrently Enrolled Pupils Pupils who are enrolled both in a regular program for at least the minimum school day and also in a regional occupational center or program (ROC/P) or class for adults. Such a student will generate both regular ADA for the time in the regular program plus concurrently enrolled ADA for the time in ROC/P or adult classes. By qualifying for both regular ADA and concurrently enrolled ADA, such a student can generate more than one unit of ADA.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) A measure of the cost-of-living for consumers compiled by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Separate indices of inflation are calculated regularly for the United States, California, some regions within California and selected cities. The CPI is one of several measures of inflation.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) An increase in funding for government programs, including revenue limits or categorical programs. Current law ties the COLA for most education programs to the annual percentage change in the "Implicit Price Deflator" for State and Local Governments – a government price index. (See Education Code Section 42238.1.)

Credentialed Teacher One holding a credential to teach issued by the State Commission on Teacher Credentialing. A credential is issued to those who have successfully completed all college training and courses required by the State, have graduated from an accredited college or university, have met any other state requirements and have passed the California Basic Education Skills Test (CBEST).

Criteria and Standards Local school agency budgets must meet state-adopted provisions of "criteria and standards." These provisions establish minimum fiscal standards, such as a minimum reserve level, that school districts, county offices of education and the State use to monitor fiscal solvency and accountability. See Education Code Sections 33127 et seq.

Declining Enrollment Adjustment A formula that cushions the drop in income in a district with a declining student population. Under current law, districts are funded for the higher of either current year or prior year ADA.

Deficit Factor When an appropriation to the State School Fund for revenue limits – or for any specific categorical program – is insufficient to pay all claims for state aid, a deficit factor is applied to reduce the allocation of state aid to the amount appropriated.

Economic Impact Aid (EIA) State categorical aid for districts with concentrations of children who are bilingual, transient and/or from low income families.

Encroachment The expenditure of school districts' general purpose funds in support of a categorical program, i.e. the categorical expense encroaches into the district's general fund for support. Encroachment occurs in most districts and county offices that provide special education and transportation. Other encroachment is caused by deficit factors or local decisions to allocate general purpose funds to special purpose programs.

Encumbrances Obligations in the form of purchase orders, contracts, salaries, and other commitments chargeable to an appropriation for which a part of the appropriation is reserved.

Equalization Aid The extra state aid provided in some years – such as 1996-97 – to a low revenue district to increase its base revenue limit toward the statewide average.

ERAF Education Revenue Augmentation Fund – the fund used to collect the property taxes that are shifted from cities, the county and special districts within each county, prior to their distribution to K-14 school agencies.

Factfinding The culmination of the Impasse Procedures, Article 9, of the State's collective bargaining law. A tripartite panel, with the chairperson appointed and paid for by PERB, considers several specifically enumerated facts and makes findings of fact and recommendations in terms of settlement to a negotiating agreement. Such recommendations are advisory only and may be adopted or rejected in whole or in part by the parties.

Forest Reserve Funds 25% of funds received by a county from the United States Government from rentals of forest reserve lands are apportioned among the various districts in the county according to school population.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) A count of full-time and part-time employees where part-time employees are reported as an appropriate fraction of a full-time position. This fraction is equal to the ratio of time expended in a part-time position to that of a full-time position.

Gann Spending Limit A ceiling, or limit, on each year's appropriations of tax dollars by the state, cities, counties, school districts, and special districts. Proposition 4, an initiative passed in November 1979, added controls on appropriations in Article XIII B of the California Constitution. Using 1978-79 as a base year, subsequent years' limits have been adjusted for: (1) an inflation increase equal to the change in the Consumer Price Index or per capita personal income, whichever is smaller; and, (2) the change in population, which for school agencies is the change in ADA. Proposition 111, adopted in June 1990, amended the Gann limit inflation factor to be based only on the change in per capita personal income.

General Obligation Bonds Bonds that are a "general obligation" of the government agency issuing them, i.e. their repayment is not tied to a selected revenue stream. Bond elections in a school district must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate, but state bond measures require only a majority vote.

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) A program for students in grades 1 through 12 who have shown potential abilities of high performance, capability and needing differentiated or accelerated education. "Gifted child educational programs" are those special instructional programs, supportive services, unique educational materials, learning settings, and other services which differentiate, supplement and support the regular educational program in meeting the needs of gifted students.

High Revenue Districts Districts that have a revenue limit per ADA that is greater than the state average for the same type of district (elementary, high school or unified). Many high revenue districts were formerly called "high wealth" because their assessed value per ADA was significantly above the statewide average.

Implicit Price Deflator See Cost-of-Living Adjustment.

Indirect Expense and Overhead Those elements of indirect cost necessary to the operation of the district or in the performance of a service that are of such nature that the amount applicable to each accounting unit cannot be separately identified. Indirect costs are allocated to all programs in a school agency as a percentage of direct and allocated costs for each program.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) A written agreement between a school agency and parents or guardians of a disabled child specifying an educational program tailored to the needs of the child, in accordance with federal PL 94-142 regulations. An IEP team is comprised of a certified district employee who is qualified to supervise special education, the child's teacher, one or both parents, the child, if appropriate, and other individuals at the discretion of the parent or school. The IEP must include a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance, a statement of annual goals and short term instructional objectives, a statement of the specific special education and related services to be provided to the child, the extent to which the child will participate in regular education programs, the projected dates for starting services, appropriate objective criteria, evaluation procedures, and schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether the short term instructional objectives are being achieved.

Least Restrictive Environment Federal and state law requires that disabled students be placed in the least restrictive educational appropriate to their needs so that they can, to the extent appropriate, integrate and be educated with non-disabled students.

Leveling Down Lowering the revenue level of high revenue districts to promote revenue equity among school districts.

Leveling Up Raising the revenue level of low revenue districts to promote revenue equity among school districts.

Mandated Costs School district expenses that occur because of federal or state laws, decisions of state or federal courts, federal or state administrative regulations. Costs that are mandated by state law or regulations must be reimbursed by the state, while costs mandated by federal law, a court or an initiative do not need to be reimbursed by the state. See SB 90, 1977.

Maintenance Assessment Districts A methodology for local agencies, including school agencies, to charge property owners a fee for the benefit derived by the property as a result of local agency service improvements. (See Lighting and Landscape Act of 1972, Section 22500 of the Street and Highways Code). Originally, school agencies were allowed to impose the "fee" by a vote of the local governing board only, by merely showing a benefit to each fee payer. Now, however, a school agency must hold an election before such a fee can be levied.

Maintenance Factor See Proposition 98.

Miscellaneous Funds Local revenues received from mineral royalties, bonuses and other payments in lieu of taxes. Fifty percent of such revenues are used as an offset to state aid in the revenue limit formulas.

Necessary Small School An elementary school with 96 or fewer ADA or high school with 286 or fewer ADA that meets the standards of being "necessary." (See Education Code Sections 42280 et seq.)

Parcel Tax A special tax that is a flat amount per parcel and not ad valorem based (i.e. not according to the value of the property). Parcel taxes must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate. (See Government Code Section 50079, et al.)

PERB Public Employment Relations Board. Five persons appointed by the Governor to regulate collective bargaining between school employers and employee organizations. (See Government Code Sections 3541, et seq.)

Permissive Override Tax Prior to Proposition 13, any of a number of local tax levies that were for specific purposes and that required only the permission of a school board to be levied. School agencies are no longer allowed to levy such taxes.

PERS Public Employees' Retirement System. State law requires that classified employees, their employer, and the state contribute to this retirement fund.

PL81-874 A federal program of "Impact Aid" that provides funds to school agencies that educate children whose families live and/or work on federal property, such as military bases. Also called "PL874."

PL94-142 Federal law that mandates a "free and appropriate" education for all disabled children.

Prior Year's Taxes Tax revenues that had been delinquent in a prior year and that are received in the current fiscal year. These revenues offset state aid in the current year in the revenue limit formula.

Proposition 13 An initiative amendment passed in June 1978 adding Article XIII A to the California Constitution. Under Proposition 13, tax rates on secured property are restricted to no more than 1% of full cash value. Proposition 13 also defined assessed value and required a two-thirds vote to increase existing taxes or levy new taxes.

Proposition 98 An initiative adopted in 1988 and then amended by Proposition 111 in 1990. Proposition 98 contains three major provisions: (1) a minimum level of state funding for K-14 school agencies (unless suspended by the Legislature); (2) a formula for allocating any state tax revenues in excess of the state's Gann Limit; and, (3) the requirement that a School Accountability Report Card be prepared for every school. The minimum funding base is set equal to the greater of the amount of state aid determined by two formulas, commonly called ATest 1@ and ATest 2@ – unless an alternative formula, known as "Test 3," applies.

"Test 1" originally provided that K-14 school agencies shall receive at least 40.319% of state general fund tax revenues in each year, the same percentage as was appropriated for K-14 school agencies in 1986-87. Due to the shift in property taxes from local governments to K-14 agencies, the "Test 1" percentage has been reset at 34.559%.

"Test 2" provides that K-14 school agencies shall receive at least the same amount of combined state aid and local tax dollars as was received in the prior year, adjusted for the statewide growth in K-12 ADA and an inflation factor equal to the annual percentage change in per capita personal income.

"Test 3" only applies in years in which the annual percentage change in per capita state general fund tax revenues plus 1/2% is lower than the "Test 2" inflation factor (i.e. change in per capita personal income), and in this case the "Test 2" inflation factor is reduced to the annual percentage change in per capita state general fund tax revenues plus 1/2%.

One provision of Proposition 98/111 applies whenever the minimum funding level is reduced due either to "Test 3" or the suspension of the minimum funding level by the Legislature and Governor. The "maintenance factor" is initially calculated as the amount of the funding reduction, and this amount grows each year by statewide ADA growth and inflation. In subsequent years when state taxes grow quickly, this "maintenance factor" is restored by increasing the Proposition 98 minimum funding level until the funding base is fully restored.

Reduction-in-Force (RIF) The process whereby employment is terminated because of a need to reduce the staff rather than because of any performance inadequacies of the employee.

Reserves Funds set aside in a budget to provide for estimated future expenditures or to offset future losses, for working capital, or for other purposes.

Revenue Limit The amount of revenue that a district can collect annually for general purposes from local property taxes and state aid. The revenue limit is composed of a base revenue limit – a basic education amount per unit of ADA computed by formula each year from the previous year's base revenue limit – and any of the number of revenue limit adjustments that are computed anew each year.

The total revenue limit of a school district is generally determined by multiplying the district's P-2 ADA times the base revenue limit, adding the applicable revenue limit adjustments and applying a deficit factor.

Revolving Cash Funds A stated amount of money used primarily for emergency or small or sundry disbursements and reimbursed periodically through properly documented expenditures, which are summarized and charged to property accounting classifications.

ROC/P Regional Occupational Center or Program – a vocational educational program for high school students and adults. A ROC/P may be operated by a single district, by a consortium of districts under a joint powers agreement (JPA), or by a county office of education for the districts within the county.

SB 90 Reference to Senate Bill 90 (Chapter 1406/1972) that established the revenue limit system for funding school districts. The first revenue limit amount was determined by dividing the district's 1972-73 state and local income by that year's ADA. This per-ADA amount is the historical base for all subsequent revenue limit calculations.

SB 813 Reference to Senate Bill 813 (Chapter 498/1983) that provided a series of education "reforms" in funding calculations. Longer day, longer year, mentor teachers and beginning teacher salary adjustments are a few of the programs implemented by this 1983 legislation.

Scope of Bargaining The range of subjects that are negotiated between school agencies and employee organizations during the collective bargaining process. Scope includes matters relating to wages, hours and working conditions as defined in the Government Code. PERB and the courts are responsible for interpreting disputes about scope.

Secured Roll That portion of the assessed value that is stationary, i.e., land and buildings. See also Unsecured Roll. The secured roll averages about 90% of the taxable property in a district.

Serrano Decision In 1974, the California Superior Court in Los Angeles County ruled in the Serrano v. Priest case that school district revenues in California depended so heavily on local property taxes that students in districts with a low assessed value per pupil were denied an equal educational opportunity in violation of the "Equal Protection" clause of the California Constitution. This ruling established certain standards under which the school finance system would be constitutional and was upheld by the California Supreme Court in 1976. In 1983, the California Superior Court in Los Angeles County ruled that the system of school finance in effect at that time was in compliance with the earlier Court order. The case was subsequently appealed to the Appellate Court which upheld the Superior Court ruling. In March 1989, all of the plaintiffs in the case agreed to dismiss their appeals, thereby settling Serrano as a legal issue.

Slippage Savings in state school fund appropriations that are the result of property tax revenues growing faster than a district's cost-of-living and enrollment growth. When property tax growth is greater than the growth in a district's total revenue limit, state aid to the district declines, creating a "slippage" in state expense.

Squeeze Formula The formula used from 1973-74 through 1981-82 for the calculation of the annual inflation increase in the base revenue limit that provided smaller-than-average increases to high revenue districts. This formula thus "squeezed" the revenues of high revenue districts as a means of promoting revenue equalization. Effective 1983-84, the squeeze formula was eliminated and all districts of the same type now receive the same dollar inflation increase.

State Allocation Board (SAB) The regulatory agency that controls most state-aided capital outlay and deferred maintenance projects and distributes funds for them.

State School Fund Each year the state appropriates money to this fund, which is then used to make state aid payments to school districts. Section A of the State School Fund is for K-12 education and Section B is for community college education.

STRS The State Teachers' Retirement System, which is funded by contributions from both certificated employees and their employing school agencies, as well as by direct payments by the state.

Subventions The term used to describe assistance or financial support, usually from higher governmental units to local governments or school agencies. State aid to school agencies is a state subvention.

Sunset The termination of a categorical program. A schedule is in current law for the Legislature to consider the "sunset" of most state categorical programs. If a program sunsets under this schedule, the funding for the program shall continue but the specific laws and regulations shall no longer apply.

Supplemental Roll An additional property tax assessment for properties that are sold or newly constructed that reflect a higher market value than on their prior lien date. By taxing this increase in assessed value immediately – rather than waiting until the next lien date – additional property taxes are generated.

Test 1/Test 2/Test 3 See Proposition 98.

Unduplicated Count The number of pupils receiving special education or special services under the Master Plan for Special Education on the census dates of December 1 and April 1. Even though a pupil may receive multiple services, each pupil is counted only once in the unduplicated count.

Unencumbered Balance That portion of an appropriation or allotment not yet expended or obligated.

Unsecured Roll That portion of assessed property that is movable, such as boats, planes, etc.

Waivers Permission from the State Board of Education – or, in some cases, from the Superintendent of Public Instruction – to set aside the requirements of an Education Code provision upon the request of a school agency. Certain Education Code sections cannot be waived. (See Education Code Section 33050.)