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Characteristics of Student Poverty Measures

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Overview

This presentation will provide information on the following questions:

1. What are the different ways student poverty is measured?
2. In what ways are student poverty measures different?
3. How do Oregon's two primary student poverty measures compare?



Background

Student poverty measures indicate the number or percentage of students experiencing poverty as defined by family income and/or economic resources at or below a certain threshold.

Measuring student poverty is consequential. Research has shown strong connections between student poverty and educational outcomes. Student poverty measures have many uses, including for education funding, accountability, research, and program design.

Measuring student poverty is complex. Many different measures have been constructed over time, each with strengths and weaknesses for their intended uses. They vary in many ways, including on how they define poverty, and the data used to construct them.



What are the different ways student poverty is measured?

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL)
State Agencies

Direct Certification
State Agencies

Students Experiencing Poverty
Oregon Dept. of Ed.

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)
U.S. Census

Official Poverty Measure
U.S. Census

Supplemental Poverty Measure
U.S. Census

Model Estimates of Poverty in Schools
Urban Institute

School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates
U.S. Dept. of Ed.



● Student poverty measures currently or formerly used in Oregon

○ Other student poverty measures

How student poverty measures differ: Measurement level

Measurement Level

What the measure counts

- Student poverty is typically measured at the student level, school level, or district level.
- Student-level measures identify individual students who are experiencing poverty, then use those records to determine poverty rates at the school and district levels. School- and district-level measures use data sources like U.S. Census surveys to estimate poverty rates at the school and district levels but do not identify individual students.
- Different measurement levels have strengths and weaknesses for different uses and will differ in other ways depending on the parameters of the data used to construct them.

Income Threshold

How the measure defines poverty

Other Factors

Additional ways measures are different



How student poverty measures differ: Income thresholds

Measurement Level	What the measure counts
Income Threshold	How the measure defines poverty
Other Factors	Additional ways measures are different



How student poverty measures differ: Other factors

Measurement Level	What the measure counts
Income Threshold	How the measure defines poverty
Other Factors	Additional ways measures are different <ul style="list-style-type: none">Data Sources: Measures are constructed using a variety of data sources, including administrative records, survey data, and combinations of the two. Data sources can affect the accuracy, reliability (consistency over time), and validity (does it measure what it intends to) of the measures.Timing/Latency: The timing of a measure's availability depends on the timing of data availability and how much time is needed to process and analyze the data. All measures have at least some lag time, meaning they don't reflect poverty rates in real time, but some have a much longer lag time compared to others.Methodology: Measures based on statistical modeling use different methods determined by what researchers believe will generate the most accurate and valid estimates of student poverty.



How do Oregon's primary student poverty measures compare?¹

	Students Experiencing Poverty (SEP)	Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)
Measurement level	Student, aggregated to school and district levels	District
Income threshold	Up to 200% of FPL (based on SNAP eligibility rules)	100% of FPL
Primary data sources	Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Department of Education Includes students who receive SNAP or TANF; students in foster care; students who are homeless; students who receive migrant education services	U.S. Census surveys; Internal Revenue Service (income tax returns); U.S. Department of Agriculture and individual state agencies (SNAP recipients); U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Social Security Administration (Supplemental Security Income recipients) Does not identify individual students but uses a statistical model to estimate a snapshot of student poverty rates using multiple sources of de-identified/anonymous data
Calculation frequency and lag	Calculated annually with a 1-year lag (for example, the poverty rate calculated for the 2024–2025 school year uses data from the 2023–2024 school year)	Calculated annually with up to a 2-year lag (for example, the U.S. Census Bureau publicly released data from 2023 in December 2024, and it may not be available for use until the 2025–2026 school year)
Constructed and maintained by	Oregon Department of Education	U.S. Census Bureau; adjusted by the Oregon Department of Education for use in education funding distributions



¹ The information on this slide is a high-level overview based on publicly available research, administrative documents, and conversations with Oregon Department of Education staff. Due to the levels of complexity underlying each of these measures, including how Oregon uses them, the details provided in this comparison may be incomplete.

Sample of References

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