



STATE OF WASHINGTON

December 1, 2009

TO: Education and Fiscal Committees of the Legislature
Quality Education Council
State Board of Education

FROM: Funding Formula Technical Working Group

SUBJECT: Class size, planning time and instructional time assumptions used to establish baseline of current funding

There has been much discussion about how to interpret the Funding Formula Technical Working Group's analysis representing current funding levels in the new prototypical school formula, specifically in the interrelations among class size, planning time and instructional hours.

In creating this baseline representation of current resources in the new structure, many assumptions had to be made about how to allocate current, large categories of resources among the new, more transparent formula elements. For example, the current staffing units generated for certificated instructional staff (CIS) need to be distributed among the following categories: teacher/class size, teacher librarian, guidance counselor, student health, and professional development coaches. In general, the Funding Formula Technical Working Group used assumptions based on the current staffing and current operations of school districts. For example, the CIS units were distributed among the new categories proportional to the staffing patterns in school districts' basic education programs.

These assumptions were not intended to be statements on current state funding policies. For example, the lump sum non-employee cost allocation was distributed among the new categories of maintenance, supplies, and operating costs proportionate to the district expenditures in those areas. There are many who would argue that technology has never been funded by the state allocation. Instead of taking a position on this argument, the FFTWG recommended distributing the funds proportionately in an effort to reflect what state funds *could purchase*. Because the current state funding categories for staff and non-employee related costs are provided on an allocation basis with uses decided at the local level, debating what the state intends to fund in class size or technology or other areas was seen as an impossible argument. Instead, the Group chose to reflect what state resources could purchase based on current expenditure patterns.

This is true in the discussion of planning time and instructional hours as well. Many would argue that the state has never recognized or specifically funded planning time. Similarly, many believe that the state allocations were constructed based on a five-hour day because of the definition of a

full-time equivalent student and the minimum of 25 hours per week for secondary grades 7-12 specified in administrative code (WAC 392.121.122). Except for Running Start and Skills Centers provisions, a high school student taking 6 classes neither counts as additional student FTE, nor generates additional funding compared to a student taking 5 classes, or 5 hours per day. However, the reality is that teachers have planning time and schools offer closer to 5.6 hours of instruction per day in elementary schools and 6 hours per day in middle and high schools, although there is variation across the state. These extra hours are funded primarily by local funds and not from the current state funding formula. If the FFTWG would have chosen to represent current state formulas without planning time or based on the five hour day, this would translate into much lower class sizes when stating the current baseline values which reflect a fixed amount of funding. However, those class sizes would not reflect the reality of how all resources are used in school districts. It would not be readily apparent or understandable that the low class sizes were only accomplished by assuming a different operating structure than that seen in any school. In the end, the FFTWG recommended basing the planning time, instructional time, and thus class size assumptions in a manner that reflected the current operations of schools.

Some may want to interpret this baseline exercise as an indication that the state funds enough instructional time to implement new graduation requirements under the Core 24 proposal. This would not be the position, nor the recommendation of the FFTWG. Members indicated that more resources would be needed to implement the Core 24 requirements. Assuming a six-hour day in high school would mean that each student has an opportunity for 24 credits during their high school years, but leaves no room for additional reading and math classes during the school day for struggling students or re-takes of classes in the case of failures to pass every class the first time. The system must recognize this reality and build in additional instructional time and opportunities. In addition, a reasonable approach to “real” lower class sizes will allow for more individualized attention and greater student success. These are the types of cost elements that will need to be addressed to successfully implement Core 24 graduation requirements.

Further, the group identifies that districts will be required to provide 1,000 instruction hours at each elementary grade level. This requirement will be intertwined with class size and planning time assumptions. Some districts may not be at this level as the state transitions to the new funding formulas. For future development of formulas, the formulas should assume a 1,000 instructional hour year for elementary students with 13 percent planning time assumption for elementary teachers. What this means is that in a school day, students would have 5.6 hours of instruction. As an example, 1 teacher would have 45 minutes of planning and 4.9 hours of instruction in front of a class.