

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Resource Proposal

Develop an allocation for curriculum and instructional materials that puts up-to-date curriculum and appropriate instructional materials in all classrooms to give Washington students the opportunity to learn state standards.

Ultimately, the state should provide funding for a 6–year, curriculum instructional material cycle by allocating a per student FTE allocation of \$126 per year.

A per year allocation of \$126/student will permit a district to update curriculum on a 6-year adoption cycle, which includes:

- Student textbooks and instructional materials, per adoption cycle
- Teacher materials, per adoption cycle
- Classroom costs incurred for each adoption cycle (i.e. Civil War kit, technology needs)

Further, this amount should be inflated by the increase in costs associated with items on the state curriculum menu rather than Implicit Price Deflator. The funding allocation is embedded in the Non-Employee Related Cost (NERC) allocation.

Curriculum Adoption Background

The need for current, up-to-date instructional materials is paramount. Researchers estimate that up to 90 percent of classroom activities are driven by instructional materials (Ravitch, 2004). The type and cost of instructional materials varies across grade levels. Textbooks and classes with lab components are more complex and therefore more expensive in high school. Elementary grades use more workbooks, worksheets and other consumables than upper grades. Best instructional strategies require aides, such as science supplies or a Civil War “kit” that help teachers demonstrate difficult concepts or gives students an enriched “hands-on” experience.

As districts use assessment data to identify student learning weaknesses, they must identify instructional materials to address these weaknesses and improve alignment with state standards. They must refresh consumable materials, and they must refresh text books that are too worn to be of use. However, districts have curriculum adoption policies that are more often driven by resource availability, not by data that suggests realignment is necessary.

Washington has just adopted new mathematics standards for K-8 and is on the verge of adopting new standards for high school. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to re-write science standards by December 2008. The mathematic standard revisions represent a significant restructuring of the content and the grade that content is introduced/expected.

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Every state has policies regarding the selection and purchase of K-12 instructional materials. To select materials, 20 states use a state-level process. Most states that use such a process formally adopt a list of approved instructional materials and districts must purchase materials from this list. A few states, however, adopt lists of “suggested” or “recommended” materials and/or grant districts some discretion to purchase materials not on the state lists. In contrast to these adoption states, 30 states use a local-level selection process. In these states, districts may purchase any instructional materials of their choosing.

Washington State has historically fallen into the second category. Recently the Legislature has required the OSPI to develop a curriculum menu for mathematics and science. The curriculum menu for mathematics is under development; the menu for science will be adopted once the standards are re-adopted in 2009. As a condition of receiving Federal Reading First funding, OSPI has developed and maintained a menu for K-3 reading materials for many years.

Importantly, the fact that many states have developed curriculum menus (many mandatory) and that Washington State is beginning to identify the materials that are best aligned with state standards, policymakers can identify how much it costs to adopt curriculum and to cover the annual consumables associated with the curriculum. Therefore, the only variable to determining how much the state should allocate for curriculum and instruction on a per student basis is the number of years a curriculum package should be in use before it is re-evaluated and potentially replaced, or at least updated.

OSPI recommends, based on national standards, a 6 year curriculum adoption cycle.

The following recommendations are from other school finance studies or actual allocations by other states for instructional materials:

Picus/Odden for Wa Learns	Textbooks and consumables annual allocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$120 per elementary student• \$120 per middle school student• \$150 per high school student
State of Tennessee	School year 2007-2008 allocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$69.44 per FTE for textbooks

Proposal Development

Washington’s school funding formula has always provided an allocation for NERC costs that has presumably included some amount for curriculum and instructional materials. If the current NERC allocation per student is proportionately divided among the necessary NERC categories, the state allocated \$42 per student for curriculum and instructional materials in the 2006-07 school year.

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Based on a survey of 2006-07 school year expenses, breaking down expenditures into more common-sense categories, 69 districts reported spending \$92 per student on curriculum and instructional materials.¹

Based on conversations with educators, review of district expenditure practices, and review of the cost of curriculum from master menus, we have identified a per student cost of curriculum and consumable instructional materials by grade and content area.² Further, we have estimated how many students participate in that content area by grade. ***A per student cost for curriculum adoption and instructional materials are easily identified.***

Using this model, and the fact that districts invested \$92 per student in curriculum and materials in 2006-07, districts can afford to re-adopt curriculum every 8 years. Curriculum adoption on a cycle faster than 8 years is subject to the availability of local funds.

Based on the fact that the state allocated \$42 per student for curriculum and instructional materials in 2006-07, districts can afford to adopt curriculum every 18 years. (An additional \$107 is funded out of the general NERC for consumable instructional materials and student supplies; districts spend \$235 per year on these items.)

¹ Data based on survey information from 69 school districts representing 37 percent of the student FTE population.

² <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/reading/ReadingProgMasterPriceAgrmnt.aspx>