

Principles and Minimum Required Decisions for Task Force Next Steps

History and Problems

- In 1993, basic education was redefined. We said that all students can and should learn to higher standards. We delineated four state learning goals that should be accomplished by all students. However, the funding model for basic education didn't change to support these assumptions.
- In the last ten years, the content of our state learning goals has been driven down to specific grade level expectations; student performance standards for our specific GLEs are imbedded in our assessment system. We have defined what kids have to learn and to what level...therefore we have to fund the school system to provide reasonable opportunities for students to achieve those outcomes. Students will need varied time and support in order to achieve learning goals.
- Teachers have a clearly defined and more complex task at each grade level. Educators must move all students to a higher performance level. Therefore, personnel development and compensation costs have changed. If we are to be honest about what we expect teachers to accomplish, we have to fund it.
- The state has abdicated its responsibilities for compensation: it has not recognized regional cost of living differences, it has not consistently addressed cost of living increases, it has retained salary inequities grandfathered decades ago, it has not recognized that teacher work changed and teachers need more time to accomplish our new goals.
- Policymakers have invested a tremendous amount of funding in public schools, but these amounts have not been adequate to keep up with the inflation and the new expectations that districts actually experience.

Principles to Guide Task Force Deliberations

- Stay learner focused; fund formulas connected to the reality of providing all students the opportunity to achieve basic education goals.
- Build excellence in teaching through development and compensation strategies.
- Use research to focus funding whenever possible, but support proven practices and experienced educators craft knowledge where it is not available.
- Design allocation formulas that are transparent, but support flexibility in district education models.
- System information and capacity building: Fund an information system so resource allocations and interventions are well informed by data; provide leveraged funding at the state and regional level to bridge more focused expenditures in districts and schools.
- State accountability: identify in statute the phase-in completion requirement to fully fund the new expectations.

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Task Force Must-Dos

1. Address the resource central to an education system---instructional staff---and improve and target these staffing ratios to realistic class sizes and workload.
2. Address other staffing levels necessary to operate a school system, including improved safety/security, appropriate facilities maintenance and technology. These two steps will largely resolve the COLA issues for districts because state staffing levels will be more reasonable and there will be far less inappropriate dependence on local levies.
3. Create a teacher salary system that first equalizes salaries based on comparable worth and second, fund more time for teachers for team planning and school-wide accountability for student results. The salary system must then differentiate salary on rational bases including:
 - regional cost of living,
 - performance, and
 - differences in student demographics coupled with higher expectations that add complexity for teachers.These changes will largely eliminate the need for local funding of supplemental pay issues.
4. Equalize salary allocations for classified and administrative staff, and create a rational on-going method to allocate salaries.
5. Address a new funding level for general operating expenditures that is commensurate with the amount that districts must spend, including appropriate levels to
 - update curriculum on a regular cycle, and
 - provide instructional technology so that students can function in today's society.Ensure that the new funding keeps pace with the real inflation that districts experience.
6. The state must invest in closing the achievement gap and reducing the number of drop-outs. Specifically the state must:
 - re-define the Learning Assistance Program funding level and formula to provide instructional support for struggling students based on the program models that lead to improved academic progress; and,
 - address the State Transitional Bilingual Program funding level and formula to provide on-going and sustainable instructional support for students learning English based on the program models that lead to improved academic progress.
7. Address the results of the pupil transportation formula study and ensure the new recommended formula will adequately address increases in fuel expenses.