



Small Schools Study

October Update
10/10/07

The small schools study committee, formed to conduct a cost/program offerings analysis of different school sizes and fine-tune the student-based budgeting (SBB) school size factor, met twice in September. The committee continued analyzing evidence and statistical research from Wyoming and Nevada, reviewed the standards for the two professional panels to use, as well as set the framework for the professional panel nominations.

Student-Based Budgeting School Size Factor

SBB allocates funds to schools based on their student characteristics. Each student receives a base-funding amount. Additional funds are allocated based on school size and individual student characteristics (gifted & talented, English Language Learners, at-risk, or both ELL and at-risk). It is this school size factor, upon which the small schools study is focusing. As the school size factor in the PSD models exists now, there are differences, or "cliffs" between different size schools. For example, there is a dip (or "cliff") in the funding weight between a school with 200 students and a school with 201 students. The small school committee is working to smooth out these "cliffs."

Evidence Based Approach

The committee reviewed current research from Wyoming on what resources are important to have in schools. The Wyoming research compares the cost of resources, such as general school structure (class size), personnel, and non-personnel, to different size schools.

Statistical Approach

Members of the small schools committee also reviewed data from a study performed in Nevada, which collected expenditure data collected at the school level. The committee will use this data to examine the differences in school spending due to school size.

Professional Panels

Two professional panels, composed of nine PSD principals and teachers, will use parameters such as the Colorado Content Standards, class size, core subjects, and electives to 'build' schools of different enrollment sizes (100, 200, 300, etc). The panels are charged with identifying the challenges each school faces, due to school size, in keeping within the set parameters. The panels are scheduled to meet in October.

Essential classes and programs in the Colorado Content Standards include language arts (reading and writing), math, science, social studies, art, music, and PE. Other programs offered may include character education, information literacy, and technology.

The small schools committee nominated members for the professional panels based on the following criteria: one principal and teacher from schools with enrollment of 0-400, 401-600, and 600 and over; a principal who has recently work in schools of varying size; and two specials teachers (art music, P.E., etc.).

Study Timeline

In December, the small schools study is expected to make a recommendation to the student-based budgeting committee about the school-size factors to affect the 2008-09 school budgets.

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