

Weighted Staffing Standards (WSS)/ School Funding Workgroup -- Meeting Notes

2021-22 School Year

Meeting Date: September 17, 2020, 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Meeting via “Teams”

Attendees:

JoLynn Berge, Eric Anderson, Sara Bonneville, Clover Codd, Sara Mirabueno, Patricia Sander, Linda Sebring, Michael Stone, Erika Ayer, Jeff Clark, Shannon Conner, Dedy Fauntleroy, Rina Geoghagan, Shelly Hurley, Stanley Jaskot, Debbie Nelsen, Brent Ostbye, Farah Thaxton, Rainey Swan, Jennifer Matter, Yvette De La Cruz.

Agenda:

1. Enrollment status
2. Budget landscape for 2021-22
3. Review of the Big Sheet for 2020-21 for both dollars and staff
4. Changes from Board on budget process

Meeting started at 3:00. Introductions all around.

- (1) Purpose of committee is to make recommendations on school funding allocations (WSS – Weighted Staffing Standard) model to the Superintendent. At times, committee members may present suggested changes before the school board.
 - Question about being involved in broader budget; how can school leader be involved?
 - Response – this committee is committed to working on school funding model.
- (2) Enrollment Status – review of September Tracking PDF that was sent out with materials for this meeting. District is down (1,068 students per this report); belief is that district will be down around 2000 overall when enrollments are cleaned-up.
 - Question about how enrollment projections are done, especially for Kindergarten
 - Discussion of FY20-21 enrollments and assumptions for initial FY20-21 projected enrollment from February.
 - Question about what thought is being made for potential in-person learning, effect on enrollment, and services.
 - Discussions are happening within the district. Other districts, the higher the poverty, the less enrollment is down (Renton and Tukwila close to projections). Districts with lower poverty have lost higher percentage of enrollment (-17% Mercer Island).
 - Question about transportation and other funding
 - Quick overview of how transportation and enrollment-based funding works. Districts are discussing with state the potential for some “hold-harmless” provisions to help protect districts from large funding losses.

- (3) Budget Landscape for FY21-22 – State has \$8-\$9 billion-dollar shortfall. Some of this will fall on K-12. A lot of what we will be dealing with is unknown. We need to have options for whatever the legislature passes. Discussion in group, general belief that kids will be back (as parents tire of home-school and as districts return to in-person teaching). How many?
- Comment - schools will need to go into budgeting with a “plan A” and a “plan B”. District often needs to be conservative in initial allocations and can later restore if funding improves.
 - The District will need to develop a “plan A” and a “plan B” as well. Discussion on state decision progress. Early action by legislature is not likely. We are in close contact with budget writers for legislature, with OSPI, and other districts.
- (4) Reviewed Big Sheet FY20-21 – document that shows funding provided through the WSS , central department resources and external grants at the time of the budget adoption. Mention of newly developed document titled “Big FTE”, which shows school level staffing by major resources.
- Question about PTA donations; sheet does not show in-kind donations.
 - Question about Equity Schools, ... non-equity schools getting less support. Is there ever going to be a time when we think about this in a different way.
 - Schools receipt of extra funding from PTA or City Levy does not affect schools funding through WSS. Limited resources mean that decisions have to be made as to who gets additional resources (e.g. equity tiers used in many decisions). District has pockets of deep student need, but the state only sees the overall (district-wide) poverty and does not consider individual needs.
 - Comment – one-student, two-student differences can significantly impact resources; problem when schools start to do better, they lose the funding that helped them get over barriers. Also, “white flight” because of choice schools.
 - There will always be cut offs with when extra resources are provided or not provided.
- Trade-offs.
- Comment – small school within a few miles of Option Schools. Feel there are ways to help small schools. Lose part of population to STEM. Kids going to Fairmont Park that live within walking of Sanislo. Can the Board look at boundaries? Other options?
 - Should we have conversation about differing funding formula for choice -vs- neighborhood schools?
 - Comment – is it role of principal to be “marketer” of their school?
- Other Discussions ...
- Do people want to discuss changes for option schools? How do people feel about doing some analysis?
 - Comments – Issue is bigger than budget. Is this an issue for a board, giving (choice) to “escape” neighborhood school and go somewhere else? This is an issue of equity. Staffing from PTA (and other) grants.
 - Board has limited staffing from PTA grants. Should there be further limits?
 - Discussion of issue with schools in the middle, not high in poverty so no additional staffing, not receiving a lot of extra, outside funding.
 - Comment about idea of base, or foundation, funding from original WSF (Weighted Student Formula) and WSS (Weighted Staffing Standard) funding discussions. Worried about “invisibility” of kids furthest from educational justice.
 - Do we need to think about adding different factors to address these issues in formula? Ideas to think about, using supplies increase for other purposes.

- Comments on issues with Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), does this really provide a measurement of schools' needs?
 - Equity tiering has other criteria other than just FRL or poverty. Most FRL comes to the District directly from the state
 - We get Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) numbers around end of Oct, and rest comes from direct (paper) applications. District chooses last day of 1st semester as day to take count of FRL (and come up with poverty percentage).
 - Comment on PTA fund raising -what is the stance of the state level PTSA organization? Does it support funding FTE from PTA (and other) grants?
 - Question about decrease in FRL numbers, were we able to understand what caused the percentage to decrease? Was it a fear from immigrant community? One school has worked with immigrant rights group to increase FRL registration.
 - Comments - yes, there is a dip, and we were able to track that it was apparent in schools with higher levels of latinx communities. Also, an ask if there is anything the district can do (more) to help promote/support families to enroll.
- (5) Changes are being discussed with the School Board about the district's budget process – Want more community participation in decisions. Define what engagement is expected and how to go about this.
- We are putting together a document to simplify the District's budget for decision making. Called the FlexView, the document looks at budget across different view. (e.g. Mandated spending, Contractual spending, spending linked to Revenues like most grants, and more Flexible Grants). Leaves limited amount of Flexible spending remaining.
 - Comments: Some schools would like more central support and guidance for principals and Building Leadership Teams (BLT's) for consistency in staffing decisions and options. Discussion. Schools can use more support and guidance around Learning Assistance Program (LAP) and other allocations that only fund limited positions. New school directors can bring more consistency and direction to staffing decisions. Idea about peer review of school budgets. Range from decentralized, where the old WSF provided dollars, to fully centralized. WSS attempts to be in the middle with allocating staffing units and some discretionary funds. Keep in mind that schools are in different places and should allow small level of decision making to remain and not put more restrictions on schools.
- (6) Agenda for next month.
- Option School funding
 - Review of School tiering
 - FRL latinx impacts
 - Report on FRL support
- Other ideas for discussion on development of WSS? Limited time available for analysis of ideas before recommendations must be made (December).
 - Two items: review middle school cut-off for Title I; closure of small schools.

- Committee could talk about process. Could we develop parameters around different programs, populations at schools? (Discussion, need to figure out why schools are small, need for alternate choices).
- Question - can we get information on number of students not going to neighborhood schools, and how it relates to size of neighborhood school or other factors?
- Upcoming meeting dates. Does this time Thursdays 3-5 work? Will continue on Thursday 3-5.
Next meeting to be scheduled in 3-4 weeks. Will try to schedule three meetings between now and December (when recommendation needs to be finalized).
- Send JoLynn ideas for discussion at next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 4:58