



Public School Finance Task Force Meeting Minutes

December 12th, 2023 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

[Link to Live Stream Meeting](#) | [SB23-287](#)

Task Force Members Present: Alex Magaña, Brenda Dickhoner, Carrie Zimmerman, Chuck Carpenter, Dan Snowberger, Kathy Gebhardt, Jennifer Okes, Kermit Snyder, Leslie Nichols, Lisa Weil, Marc Carey, Marty Gutierrez, Riley Kitts, Sarah Siegel, Sarah Swanson, Steven Bartholomew, Terry Croy Lewis, Nick Plantan

Task Force Members Absent: Deborah Hendrix

Facilitator & Support: Nick Stellitano – Dillinger Research & Applied Data, Patrick Gibson - CT School State Finance Project, Ashley Robles - CT School State Finance Project, Amy Carman - Executive Director of School Finance & Grants, Shelbie Konkel - Senior Legislative Advisor, Melissa Bloom - Principal Policy Advisor, Yolanda Lucero - Fiscal Data Coordinator

Welcome and Norms Review

- The Task Force Facilitator, Nick Stellitano, commenced the meeting at 9:04 AM MST and welcomed task force members and guests. Nick Stellitano provided a brief overview of today's agenda, reviewed technical etiquette, and reviewed the guidelines for interaction, deliberation and collaboration.
- Nick Stellitano provided an update on the task force project plan and reviewed the tentative plan for the remaining meetings.
- Nick also reviewed the workgroup purpose and scope. This included required Task Force action and the status for each item.

Adequacy Process Update

- Jennifer Okes had no new updates on the RFI. CDE has responses and is working to incorporate them into the RFP. CDE is also looking at contingencies under the current funding levels and based on the recommendations made by the Task Force on the December 5th meeting.

Recommendation Development Review

- Nick Stellitano provided a quick review of the process of decision making, and potential recommendation types.

Scenarios Review & Discussion

- Nick Stellitano provided a brief review of the work done prior to the meeting, including modeling for Scenario 4 and 5.
- The Task Force Chair, Chuck Carpenter, also highlighted that there was a week between meetings, and that a lot of effort was made from both facilitators and Task Force members. He mentioned that a ton of work has been done offline.
- Nick Stellitano reviewed the revised formula and the takeaways from the scenario review workbook. Nick also addressed questions from the Task Force regarding district losses under Scenario 5. Task Force members had additional comments and questions summarized below.

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- Some Task Force members had questions regarding CWIFT and cost of living. Clarification was provided regarding rebasing the cost of living factor and current levels of the factor.
- There were concerns about using a hold harmless to address district losses, rather than addressing with policy, such as with changes to sparsity and remoteness.
- One Task Force member had a question about the impacts to Aspen, and how those losses are occurring.
- Task Force members had concerns about using sparsity as a formula component. Facilitators gave an explanation of what is sparsity, and how it can vary.
- There was confusion around the size factor cutoff.
- Task Force members raised concerns about economies of scale.
- Some Task Force members wanted to revise the remoteness factor to include the Town classification.
- Task Force members mentioned that the revised scenarios are far better than beforehand, and provide a good starting point. It was also mentioned that the district adjustments made progress, but can be improved. Some Task Force members felt that they were on the right path towards voting on recommendations. Problems have been identified and are solvable.
 - However, some Task Force members expressed concern about the timeline to make decisions and recommendations. There was also concern about making bad decisions that would need to be revised down the line.
- Some Task Force members mentioned the need to address size in the student characteristics. Other Task Force members wanted to address size through the district adjustments.
- Task Force members still wanted to address the base.
- There were questions about the ELL weights under Scenario 5 and why that incorporates size. These weights were from the Superintendent's bill.
 - There were additional comments regarding incorporating the Superintendent's bill without increasing the base.
- Some Task Force members mentioned that rather than making recommendations with set figures and weights, should the Task Force come up with policy statements.

Recommendations Review/Refinement/Finalization

- Nick Stellitano reviewed the progress to date. Additionally, Nick reviewed the process for decision making and goals for today regarding recommendations.
- Lisa Weil asked to review all recommendations, to which Nick complied.
- Riley Kitts asked if we were to implement hold harmless and phase-in, would the facilitators be able to show the Task Force what that looks like.
 - Nick responded yes.

School Finance Formula

- Nick Stellitano introduced the first recommendation regarding the base.
- Several Task Force members provided revisions to the wording of the recommendation and split recommendation into 3 recommendations.
- There were some questions about the ability for the legislature to make revisions every year and the current inflation adjustments made each year.
- **Dan Snowberger makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend the legislature should annually revisit and update the base and need weights. Updates should reflect the results of the adequacy studies when they have been published.**

- **Brenda Dickhoner seconded the motion.**
- **Discussion:**
 - There were some revisions made to the language. Nick Stellitano revised the grammar of the statement.
 - **The motion passes by a vote of 16 in favor, and 1 absent.**
- **Lisa Weil makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend that the legislature increase the base funding levels for student education in Colorado.**
 - **Kathy Gebhardt seconded the motion.**
 - **There was no discussion.**
 - **The motion passes by a vote of 14 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 absent.**
- **Alex Magaña makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend if the results of the adequacy study show inadequate funding then the legislature should revisit and update the base and needs weights to be more inline with the studies.**
 - **Sarah Siegel seconded the motion.**
 - **Discussion:** Some Task Force members do not believe the recommendation is necessary, since the other recommendations cover the intent of this motion.
 - **The motion fails by a vote of 4 in favor, 12 opposed, and 1 absent.**

Prioritizing Student Need

- Nick proceeded to review the “Prioritizing Student Need” draft recommendations. Task Force members made several revisions to the student needs draft proposals and had several comments and questions, summarized below.
 - Task Force members wanted to add a recommendation adding Tier C to the formula. However there were concerns about the complexity of moving categorical funding to the formula and Amendment 23.
 - Task Force members discussed the At-Risk definition and weights under Scenario 4 and 5.
 - Task Force members discussed the ELL weights under each Scenario.
 - Task Force members wanted to include language about the adequacy study.
 - Task Force members wanted to include a recommendation for Gifted and Talented students.
 - The Task Force also wanted to make an overarching recommendation or statement that recommendations are not made in isolation.
 - There was discussion around finalizing language for all recommendations.
 - Task Force members had questions about how the phase-in would work.
- **Riley Kitts makes a motion to make a recommendation: The Task Force made these recommendations with the understanding of their combined effects on schools and the legislature should avoid taking recommendations in isolation.**
 - **Leslie Nichols seconded the motion.**
 - **There was no discussion.**
 - **The motion passes by a vote of 16 in favor, and 1 absent.**
- **Steven Bartholomew makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend to increase At-Risk weight to at least 0.5 and remove cap (0.3) on total possible At-Risk weight.**
 - **Carrie Zimmerman seconds the motion.**
 - **Discussion:**
 - Alex Magaña asked about differentiating based on size, and Nick Stellitano clarified that weights reflected Superintendent’s bill and Task Force member feedback.

- Task Force members discussed the process for aligning on final ELL and At-Risk weights.
 - **Brenda Dickhoner makes a motion to amend the recommendation: Recommend to increase At-Risk weight to at least 0.31 and remove cap (0.3) on total possible At-Risk weight.**
 - Chuck Carpenter seconded the motion.
 - The motion passes by a vote of 9 in favor, 7 opposed, and 1 absent.
 - No other discussion was had.
 - **Nick Stellitano calls for a vote on the amended recommendation: Recommend to increase At-Risk weight to at least 0.31 and remove cap (0.3) on total possible At-Risk weight.**
 - The motion passes by a vote of 9 in favor, 7 opposed, and 1 absent.
- **Riley Kitts makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend to increase ELL weight to at least 0.31 on total possible ELL weight.**
 - **Dan Snowberger seconded the motion.**
 - **Discussion:**
 - There was discussion about the student need weights and how they interact with size, and the funding issue for small, rural districts.
 - There was also clarification around language regarding a cap.
 - There was also confusion around the weight 0.31 under the recommendation, rather than the 0.35 weight under the Superintendent’s bill or 0.5 under all other Scenarios.
 - There was also clarification around the eligibility cap under the recommendation.
 - **Alex Magaña makes a motion to amend the recommendation: Recommend to adjust ELL weight where districts with enrollment less than 495, ELL weight is at least 0.35. For districts with enrollment at least 495, but less than 1,790, ELL weight is at least 0.372934 - (0.00004633 x DISTRICT FUNDED PUPIL COUNT). For districts with enrollment 1,790 or more, ELL weight is at least 0.29. Starting in FY25 there will be no eligibility cap for students.**
 - Lisa Weil seconded the motion.
 - The motion passes by a vote of 10 in favor, 6 opposed, and 1 absent.
 - No other discussion was had.
 - **Nick Stellitano calls for a vote on the amended recommendation: Recommend to adjust ELL weight where districts with enrollment less than 495, ELL weight is at least 0.35. For districts with enrollment at least 495, but less than 1,790, ELL weight is at least 0.372934 - (0.00004633 x DISTRICT FUNDED PUPIL COUNT). For districts with enrollment 1,790 or more, ELL weight is at least 0.29. Starting in FY25 there will be no eligibility cap for students.**
 - The motion fails by a vote of 7 in favor, 9 opposed, and 1 absent.
- Task Force members discussed the interplay of student need weights for different student needs.
- **Sarah Siegel makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend to increase ELL weight to at least .5 on total possible ELL weight. Starting in FY 25, there will be no eligibility cap for students.**
 - **Kathy Gebhardt seconded the motion.**
 - **Discussion:**

- Task Force members discussed the ELL weights and how that compares to the At-Risk weight.
 - Task Force members wrestled with the varying levels of ELL weights. They discuss the need for a recommendation for ELL, and not to be hung up on the “great” versus “good”.
 - **Leslie Nichols makes a motion to amend the recommendation: Recommend to increase ELL weight to at least .31 on total possible ELL weight. Starting in FY 25, there will be no eligibility cap for students.**
 - Riley Kitts seconded the motion.
 - The motion **fails** by a vote of 5 in favor, 11 opposed, and 1 absent.
 - Task Force members continue to discuss the recommendation at hand and the focus on students and principals.
 - **Nick Stellitano proceeds to call the vote by roll for the recommendation: Recommend to increase ELL weight to at least .5 on total possible ELL weight. Starting in FY 25, there will be no eligibility cap for students.**
 - The motion **passes** by a vote of 15 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 absent.
- **Riley Kitts makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend to include additional Tier A and B student weights in the formula. Tier A students weight would be at least 0.5. Tier B students would be at least 0.85.**
 - Dan Snowberger seconded the motion.
 - Discussion:
 - Task Force members discuss combining multiple recommendations to include Tier C students.
 - The motion **passes** by a vote of 16 in favor, and 1 absent.
- **Kathy Gebhardt makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend the legislature utilize categorical funding to address students with complex or higher special needs, sometimes referred to as Tier C.**
 - Brenda Dickhoner seconded the motion.
 - There was no discussion.
 - The motion **passes** by a vote of 16 in favor, and 1 absent.
- **Kathy Gebhardt makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend the legislature utilize categorical funding to address Gifted and Talented Students with a weight of at least .25 to Gifted and Talented Students.**
 - Leslie Nichols seconded the motion.
 - Discussion:
 - Task Force members asked where the .25 weight comes from, and the level of funding under the different student need groups.
 - Leslie Nichols responded that it came from an adequacy study, but that we have not looked at appropriate weights.
 - Task Force members also had concerns about the funding, due to access, identification, and the lack of modeling or research.
 - The motion **passes** by a vote of 10 in favor, 6 opposed, and 1 absent.

Multiplicative Indexes

- Nick proceeded to review the “Eliminating Multiplicative Indexes” draft recommendations.
- **Dan Snowberger makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend that personnel and non personnel factors be removed from the funding formula and move cost of living, size factor and any additional district weight factors from the preliminary per pupil calculation, to the end of the formula in a “District Adjustment”.**

- **Riley Kitts seconded the motion.**
- **Discussion:**
 - Task Force members shared that the recommendation has been a major accomplishment.
 - Some Task Force members mentioned that there is still concern about moving the end for simplicity.
 - **The motion passes by a vote of 14 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 absent.**

Cost of Living Factor

- Nick proceeds to review the recommendation for Revising the Cost of Living Factor.
 - Nick notes an additional recommendation could be a task force to identify or develop a revised cost of doing business factor.
 - Kathy suggested language: The task force recommends that the legislature conduct a Colorado based study for cost of doing business and cost of wages to be included in the formula.
 - The task force discusses and revises recommendations to reflect the needs of the task force members.
 - **Dan Snowberger makes a motion to make a recommendation: The task force recommends, in addition to cost of living, that the legislature conduct a Colorado based study for “cost of doing business” wage index which also reflects competitive salaries and the cost to hire and retain staff to be included in the formula. Based upon that study recommend adding a cap to the cost of living factor.**
 - **Leslie Nichols seconded the motion.**
 - **Discussion:** Several Task Force members expressed concern with not having a specific cap outlined in the recommendation.
 - **The motion fails by a vote of 5 in favor, 11 opposed, and 1 absent.**
 - **Chuck Carpenter makes a motion to make a recommendation: Recommend rebasing the cost of living factor utilizing 2021 as a base. Rebasing the cost of living factor should occur at minimum every 2 years while accounting for the historical average of districts.**
 - **Alex Magaña seconded the motion.**
 - **Discussion:** Task Force members expressed interest in meeting next week, and had concerns about adopting just 1 single cost of living recommendation.
 - **The motion passes by a vote of 13 in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 absent.**

Process Plan & Outline for Report

- Chuck Carpenter thanked Task Force members for their time and votes. He also thanked members for staying late.

Next Steps & Closing

- Nick Stellitano covered the next steps for the Task Force including a survey for an additional meeting, finalizing recommendations, and providing additional models.
- Nick Stellitano also quickly covered the report outline and the minority reports.
- Some Task Force members had questions about the cost of living cap in the next iteration of modeling and including statements of principals rather than minority reports.
- Nick Stellitano adjourned the meeting at 1:13 PM MST.