



Good Schools
Pennsylvania

Every Kid Counts.

State Board of Education Shares Details for Education Cost-Study Process

January 31, 2007 - Education stakeholders had an opportunity last week to learn more about Pennsylvania's costing-out study, when the State Board of Education convened a meeting to introduce the consultants, Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, Inc., (APA) who will be conducting the study and present an overview of the process.

The goal of costing out studies is to determine the base cost (sometimes referred to as a foundation level) of educating a student who has no special needs, attending a district with no special circumstances, to meet state requirements. Additionally, costing-out studies determine the variations on this foundation level required by particular factors impacting school districts (i.e. size, location) and their students (i.e. special education, poverty and limited English proficiency)

More than 35 other states have undergone a costing-out process, frequently using the information to guide the creation of a new school funding formula that achieves greater equity and effectiveness. The State Board of Education was directed last year by the General Assembly to steer a statewide costing-out study for Pennsylvania. To learn more about costing-out studies, visit our website at www.goodschoolspa.org.

Methodologies

APA will use four methods to analyze the resources needed for all students to attain proficiency on the state's standards:

Using the successful school district approach, APA will infer the base cost of education by analyzing the budgets of districts that are identified as "successful" based upon a particular criteria, such as meeting the goals of the Pennsylvania Accountability System. As part of this analysis APA will examine schools that are identified as high performing and low spending, as well as schools that have made significant progress in closing achievement gaps.

The professional judgment method, by contrast, will focus on identifying the resources - not dollars - that schools need to be successful. This will be accomplished by convening panels of education professionals to discuss what resources hypothetical Pennsylvania schools and districts need to help their students attain proficiency on state standards.

Using the evidence-based approach, APA will create hypothetical schools using current education research and conduct a web-based inquiry asking Pennsylvania educators and citizens to react to these models. Finally, the highly statistical cost-function approach (also known as the "black box" approach) analyzes performance, spending and efficiency.

While the costing-out study will consider transportation costs, excluded from the study will be costs related to food service or capital needs.

Public Input sought

Ten professional judgment panels are being planned for March, April, and May; each panel requires eight members, including teachers, principals, school business officials, superintendents, and others. These panels will meet for 1-2 days in different locations across the state.

The State Board of Education is now seeking nominations for these professional judgment panels. If you are a professional educator interested in participating - or know someone you would like to nominate -- please submit the individual's name, position, school entity and school, years of experience, number of districts in which the individual has worked, professional recognitions, phone number and e-mail address to Good Schools Pennsylvania at info@goodschoolspa.org. Good Schools Pennsylvania will submit this information to Dr. Robert Feir, the project manager for the costing-out study. The deadline for these nominations is February 16, 2007.

The State Board of Education and the consultants are also planning to convene meetings with non-school personnel stakeholders - parents, business leaders, and school board members - around the state. Good Schools Pennsylvania would like to identify and recommend a number of potential participants for these meetings as well. Inform us of your interest by sending an email to info@goodschoolspa.org.

Good Schools Pennsylvania is a citizen's voice for public education, formed in 2001 to promote the fundamental right of all children to a high quality public education. Our mission is to inform and mobilize citizens in support of equitable and adequate funding, proven educational practices, and accountability to achieve high-quality public schools for all of Pennsylvania's children. For more information call 866- 720-4086 or email info@goodschoolspa.org.

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