

Oregon School Fund Task Force
High Cost Disability Grant Subcommittee
April 22, 2014

Facilitator:

Michael Wiltfong

Task Force Subcommittee Attendees:

John Hayes

John Rexford

Michael Wolfe

Audience:

Kathryn Skimas
Jeanne Zuniga
David Williams

Ozzie Rose
Laurie Wimmer
Morgan Allen

Dae Baek
Morgan Allen
Chuck Bennett

Mark Thielman
Jan McComb

- Michael Wiltfong: gave a PowerPoint presentation showing the history and trend of the High Cost Disability Grant. This presentation also included a brief summary of what other states are doing in regard to funding for their high cost students.
- Laurie Wimmer: asked if there were any states that paid 100% of their high cost students' expenses, to which Michael Wiltfong said he was not aware - nor was anyone else in the audience aware if 100% coverage.
- Morgan Allen: was concerned that simply increasing the amount of the current carve-out from the State School Fund (SSF) would simply "thin the soup" for general education students if the overall budget wasn't increased, and suggested additional funds be added to the SSF to offset the impact of a bigger carve-out.
- John Rexford: was concerned about the impact of the current low rate and how it may be impacting smaller school districts. Noting that one or two high cost students could be very challenging financially for a small district, as they don't have a lot of other resources to draw upon as you might see in a larger district.
- David Williams: noted that it is difficult for large districts to absorb these costs as well and suggested that high cost students be paid for with funds outside the SSF.
- Morgan Allen: noted it appears most of the students reside in 12 districts (two-thirds of the population), with the remaining 185 districts having the remaining one-third

- Mark Theilman: noted the impact for a small school district to have high cost students can be very challenging... especially now with open-enrollment laws – students are more transient than in the past.
- John Hayes: spoke about the statistics of high cost and was interested to see data relating to ratios of high cost students to the regular education students for school districts statewide.
- There was more discussion by the group about having separate grant-in-aid for high cost students, to which Laurie Wimmer said she would like to see the true cost for providing education to these students, as right now a lot of these costs are not very apparent.
- There was also discussion about a having a fixed rate and leaving the grant amount at the current amount, and possibly adjusting the threshold to accommodate demand.
- Michael Wiltfong: asked if there was any thought about having an application process, moving it from a formula grant to a needs grant, to which the group strongly opposed that idea.
- John Rexford: said he would like to see the threshold lowered to \$25,000 to reduce the “donut hole” which he realizes will increase demand for the grant. He asked if there was any data to show how much more demand this would create to which Michael Wiltfong said that data does not currently exist and would require a new data collection for the districts.
- The group also brought up the idea to review if other state services, such as health care and mental health could be engaged to see if some of the cost shifts to education could be brought back under Human Services. Also, there was interest to see if data existed at the state level that could show the types of costs typically associated with high cost students. Michael Wiltfong explained the financial data submitted by the school districts to the state was not at the student level and that there would need to be a new data collection in order to get that type of data.
- There was a suggestion to see if the top 15 districts, in regards to number of high cost students, would be interested in submitting student-level financial data to see what those costs look like in general.
- Ozzie Rose: would like to see if there is data to show the ratio of high cost students per district ADMr and Michael Wiltfong said he would work on that.
- Michael Wolfe: suggested that instead of asking for new money from the Legislature, that we instead look within existing carve-outs in the SSF, such as the Facility Grant, and put those funds in the High Cost Disability Grant.

- Laure Wimmer: asked if there could be a data run to show financial impact on the districts if we move money around and Michael Wiltfong said yes, that could be reviewed.

In summary, the meeting lasted two hours and there was good discussion with a number of ideas considered. The subcommittee would like to meet again after there has been an opportunity to review data requests. It is anticipated the next meeting will take place in May. The subcommittee did come up with some tentative recommendations for consideration at this time:

1. Look for new sources of additional funding
2. Reduce the threshold to \$25,000 from \$30,000
3. Have a target rate of .80 cents per dollar
4. Maintain formula-driven grant as opposed to a discretionary needs-based grant