



COLORADO
Department of Education

Public School Finance Task Force Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The purpose of this document is to compile and provide answers to frequently asked questions surfaced by task force members and the public regarding the charge of the task force and specific analyses and pieces of content reviewed at task force meetings. Additional questions not answered in this document may be directed to Amy Carman, Executive Director of School Finance and Grants at the Colorado Department of Education at carman_a@cde.state.co.us.

QUESTION: What was the basis for special education proposal #1 at Task Force meeting #4, which specified a weight of 2.32 for special education students in the school funding formula?

ANSWER: The special education proposal in question used the SEFAC report data to derive a prototype average special education expense per student from state and local sources, in support of task force member feedback on the inclusion of special education weight in the formula and using the best available information on actual special education spending and populations in the state. The resulting per-student spending (not necessarily cost) was compared to the funding formula base amount of the same FY to calculate a proposed weight (2.32) as a measure of how much more (on average) is spent on special education students compared to the formula base amount.

It is important to note that this proposal does not target any level of spending (current spend, ideal, etc.) or replace existing set of categoricals but rather envisions a formula that uses the actual spending data to implement a special education weight to the formula in a manner similar to at-risk or English Learners are "weighted", as a jumping off point for task force members to provide feedback, perspective, and further refine.

As the ~\$995m on special education from the SEFAC report is solely special education expenditures (not cost) proposal #1 implements that amount (average per student) above the weight to envision the system where special education costs per student sit above the base amount. The feedback the facilitation team has received from several task force members on the student need area of this work is that current spending levels do not reflect the true need of special

education students (and, indeed, all students with/without additional learning needs).

It is the plan of the facilitation team to revise proposals and provide additional scenarios as ultimately the set of recommendations that come out of this work will be a function of the priorities and perspectives of task force members.

QUESTION: The task force meeting #4 (10/27/2023) presentation contains slides with “Updated 10/25” text and slightly different numbers than were presented at the task force meeting on 10/17. Why were these numbers updated, and what changed?

ANSWER: While the models used to analyze the impact of the student need proposals reviewed at task force meeting #4 (10/17/23) were reviewed and signed off on by CDE staff, CDE staff and Legislative Council Staff recently identified a small technical fix in these models that impacted three of the shared proposals in a minor way. This technical fix required the facilitation team to enter an “unreachably high” figure in the funding formula model, and resulted in the following impact:

- At-Risk Proposal 1 (+\$96M or 3% increase in total program funding)
- At-Risk Proposal 3 (+\$122,000, 0% increase in total program funding)
- SPED Proposal 1 (+\$59M or 2% increase in total program funding)

Moving forward, models used to analyze task force proposals will include the small technical fix mentioned above, and CDE staff will continue to review and sign off on the analysis prior to sharing with the task force. When final proposals are developed for review and approval by task force members as recommendations, CDE staff and Legislative Council Staff will validate and sign off on district and state impacts for review by task force members.