

**Investing in P-12 Education and
Achieving State Education Requirements**

Achieving academic success and meeting the accountability expectations in Colorado requires investing in students and teachers. Analysis of Colorado's education expectations for *all students to succeed* requires long term investments in:

1. Preschool for special needs students.
2. Universal full day kindergarten.
3. **Class size of 15-1 for Preschool – 3rd grade, 25-1 for 4th – 12th**
4. Additional instruction time for students struggling to meet academic expectations – (before and after school programs, more days in the year, summer school etc.)
5. Increased staff development.
6. Increased computers and technology for students and staff.
7. Additional support for students identified with special needs. (special education, at-risk, English language learners, gifted and talented)

These requirements are quite different than the current conditions in Colorado.

The implementation of these programs have substantial implications regarding the current facilities of school districts. Analysis of facilities would need to be completed and the financial investment would be additional and need to be addressed.

The Colorado School Finance Project (CSFP) contracted the nationally recognized firm of Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) to assist with the analysis in Colorado. The focus was on the programs needed to meet the academic expectations required by the accountability systems. The analysis indicates an additional \$2.9 billion is needed to accomplish Colorado's goals for our students - universal proficiency.

The CSFP used 2005-06 as the basis for its cost estimates. After determining the cost in each school district, the CSFP added all costs together and compared the total to current operating revenues of school districts, excluding overrides. Assuming 100 percent proficiency goal, \$2.9 billion in new revenue would be required. The largest factors in this revenue calculation are: **class size reduction, 46,000 additional students and adequately serving special needs students.** Many of the parameters used to estimate costs could be used to distribute state support through the School Finance Act.

The current analysis recognizes the fact that standards, assessments and other school reform possibilities may be implemented. The current discussion around increased vocational education programs, more time for all students, and new student and accountability requirements would all need to be analyzed. The above costing out would be updated based on new goals or directions.

Background:

The analyses developed a cost estimate for every school district, each of which must deal with circumstances beyond their control, including student demographics, district size and location. Educator panels reviewed the programs needed to accomplish the expectations. Then programs were costed out, statewide averages for salaries and benefits included and ultimately produced a base cost figure. The base cost figure assumes a student with no special needs in a district with average characteristics. After the base amount is derived for each district then adjustments are included reflecting district characteristics, a weighted amount is also assigned for each of the special students they are serving. These students are designated by special education, at-risk and non-English speaking.

Other States:

This type of analysis has been conducted and implemented in numerous states. Educator panels consistently have identified a need for varied programs and offerings, class size reduction, improving staff development, early education and improving access for technology. States and districts are also trying to balance local control issues and state requirements; many are changing accountability systems to honor this balance. Accountability systems have become focal points to ensure the goals of improved academic performance and additional investment of resources are making a difference in increased student performance. Examples would be the Thornton Commission/Bridge to Excellence in Maryland and P-16/Every Student for Success in Kentucky.

Colorado's Analysis:

The costing out analysis included the following components:

1. Base Amount – amount changes with increased academic expectations and inflation.
2. District Size – each district
3. Pupil count – includes almost **46,000 more students** than currently serving with preschool for 4 year olds with special needs and full day kindergarten for all students.
4. **Special Needs Students – At-risk, special education and English language learner students all are weighted and adjusted by the size of the district.**
5. Cost of living/Personnel Cost – adjustments made based on implementation of 2005 state study.
6. Online – Fulltime online students are counted at the minimum funding.
7. Changing enrollment – Changes over a 4 year time span reflecting trends in growing and declining districts.
8. Choice – Recognizes the initial costs a district has with a new charter school. This is a declining percentage over 3 years.
9. Transportation – Is calculated on current spending of school districts.

Adjustments reflecting changes in economic conditions and academic achievement expectations would be done yearly.

More detail of the analysis is on www.cosfp.org under the Adequacy/Equity tab.