



# Rural Education Center

## News Update for REC Members

Date: Oct. 15, 2009

Topic: *Small School Funding Enhancements & the K-12 Funding Formula Technical Working Group*

**Dear REC Members:**

**The Quality Education Council (QEC)** was created by the Legislature in [ESHB 2261](#), a major education reform bill passed during the 2009 session. Its purpose is to develop strategic recommendations for implementation of a new definition of Basic Education and the financing necessary to support it. Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn chairs the Council.

Four working groups have been created to develop and implement the details of 2261. **This REC update will focus on the work of the K-12 Funding Formula Technical Working Group as it pertains to small school funding enhancements.**

This technical working group has been meeting on a regular basis this fall. They have a tremendous amount of work to accomplish by December of this year. One of the areas they are looking at is the following small school **funding enhancements that currently exist:**

- Remote and Necessary
- Small School District
- Small High Schools

Go to this link for an excellent summary of these current funding enhancements:

[www.ofm.wa.gov/k12funding/20090903/small\\_school\\_funding.pdf](http://www.ofm.wa.gov/k12funding/20090903/small_school_funding.pdf)

A small school “Ad Hoc” group (made-up of members of the K-12 funding technical working group) has been meeting this fall. One of the recommendations that the K-12 funding formula technical working group has received from the small school ad hoc group is as follows:

*“All districts should be funded using the same prototypical school models (elementary, middle, and high) with additional funds added to existing and approved small schools and remote and necessary schools to match resources allocated in the current funding structure.”*

**This is significant recommendation!** Of the 295 school districts in the state of Washington, 136 districts receive some level of small school funding enhancements. If we were to lose this funding or if this funding is significantly reduced, the impacts on our small school districts will be devastating.

While this recommendation is good news, it is essential that those of us that work in small and rural districts continue to educate policy makers on the issues we face.

I have talked to several members of the K-12 funding formula technical working group and all of them have expressed support of our small school districts.

I attended the Oct. 8 meeting of the K-12 funding formula technical working group. Here is a summary of my testimony provided during the “public comments” portion the meeting:

- Please don't shortchange students just because they attend a small school district.
- Thank you for recognizing that the “prototype” funding model will not adequately address the financial needs of our small school districts.
- I encourage you to maintain and include the current small school enhancement funding formulas as you develop the specifics of the prototypical funding models.

I also distributed the following publication to the k-12 funding formula technical working group:

### [Dollars & Sense Research on Small Schools](#)

This publication presents a compelling case for preserving our small schools.

I also provided each member of the technical working group with a copy of the “consolidation talking points” flyer that was produced last spring.

The K-12 funding formula technical working group will soon be presenting numerous recommendations regarding the “new” funding structures for our K-12 system. I encourage all REC members to follow this work. Stay tuned for future updates.

I have listed the specific recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group on Small Schools below:

### K-12 Funding Formula Technical Working Group

#### **Summary of Ad Hoc Group Discussion on Small Schools**

#### **Recommendations:**

- All districts should be funded using the same prototypical school models (elementary, middle and high) with additional funds added to existing and approved small schools and remote and necessary schools to match resources allocated in the current funding structure.
- Formula blending - As the new funding formulas are phased in there should be a constant check throughout the process to assess the blending points between the funding for small schools and the regular funding formulas.
- Formula integration - The time line for various groups to address key implementation issues of SB2261 that will impact small schools extend well into the future. Some examples include Core 24, and local levy. As the work of these groups progress it is important that the small schools are considered to ensure appropriate consideration and integration of these items into the small school funding.

- Consideration should be made for incentives or policy for small high schools to increase student participation in internet or distant learning programs. The intent would be to enhance the range of offerings to these students as well as to provide assistance in mitigating the diseconomies of scale that small high schools experience and difficulties in attracting highly qualified staff.

Go to this link for updated information:

[www.k12.wa.us/QEC/Workgroups.aspx#funding](http://www.k12.wa.us/QEC/Workgroups.aspx#funding)

I hope you find this information helpful. Please contact me if you have any questions. Stay tuned for further developments and if any of you have any new information, please let me know so that I can forward it on to REC members.

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