

Financing Washington Schools for High Performance

Washington Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance

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Overview

- **Context for today's presentation**
- **The Evidence-Based model**
 - **Development**
 - **Application and implementation**
- **Research findings from Washington and other states**
- **Lessons for development of Evidence-Based funding models**

Our Work in Washington

- **Washington Learns K-12 Advisory Committee**
 - **Evidence-Based study**
 - Intensive work with the Advisory Committee
 - Substantive input from Professional Judgment Panels
 - **Successful District analysis**
 - Traditional data based analysis
 - Case studies of schools that ‘doubled’ performance



Adequacy

***What it costs to educate children
to world class performance
standards***



Why 'Adequacy'?

- **Odd word for an ambitious goal**
- **We mean doubling performance in five years**
- **Without doubling costs**

Doubling Student Performance

- **Identified 10 important steps**
- **Assessed the research evidence on what works**
- **Developed a school based model that includes strategies that have proven successful**
- **Describe how resources can be reallocated to implement those strategies**



Ten Steps to Double Performance

- 1. Conduct needs assessment**
- 2. Set higher goals**
- 3. Adopt a new curriculum**
- 4. Commit to data-based decision making**
- 5. Invest in on-going professional development**

Ten Steps to Double Performance

- 6. Focus class time more efficiently**
- 7. Provide multiple interventions for struggling students**
- 8. Create professional learning communities**
- 9. Empower leaders to support instructional improvement**
- 10. Take advantage of external expertise**



Evidence-Based Approach

- **School based model with resources for:**
 - **High quality teachers and leaders**
 - **Rigorous curriculum and standards**
 - **Strategies for struggling students**
 - **Comprehensive teacher professional development**
 - **Funds for technology and instructional materials**

Evidence-Based Approach

- **The model includes**
 - **Resources for school and district leadership**
 - **Strong accountability measures at the school, district and state level**
- **It is not just a funding model**
 - **Focus on a rigorous liberal arts education**
 - **Art, music, math, science, language arts, history, and geography**



Three Bases of Knowledge

- **How students learn complex materials:**
How People Learn
- **Resource dimension of programs that work**
- **How schools that double student performance use resources**

Key Elements of School Improvement

- **Recruiting and supporting high-quality teachers**
- **High quality instruction**
- **Classroom resources**
- **Additional support for struggling students**

Strengths of the Evidence Based Model

- **Provides detailed references to make our claims transparent**
- **Uses research from randomized trials, quasi-experimental designs, and meta-analyses**
- **Uses results from schools that have doubled performance**
- **Use effect size estimates to help policy makers establish priorities under scarce funding**
- **Findings offer a solid place to start**

The Challenge

Scale up these strategies in all districts by using resources provided by the state's funding model effectively and efficiently



What We Do

- **Link state policy with what works in schools**
- **How we know what works:**
 - **Study schools that have doubled performance**
 - **Review existing research on individual programs**
 - **Assess the most effective use of resources in schools and turn that into a new school funding model**



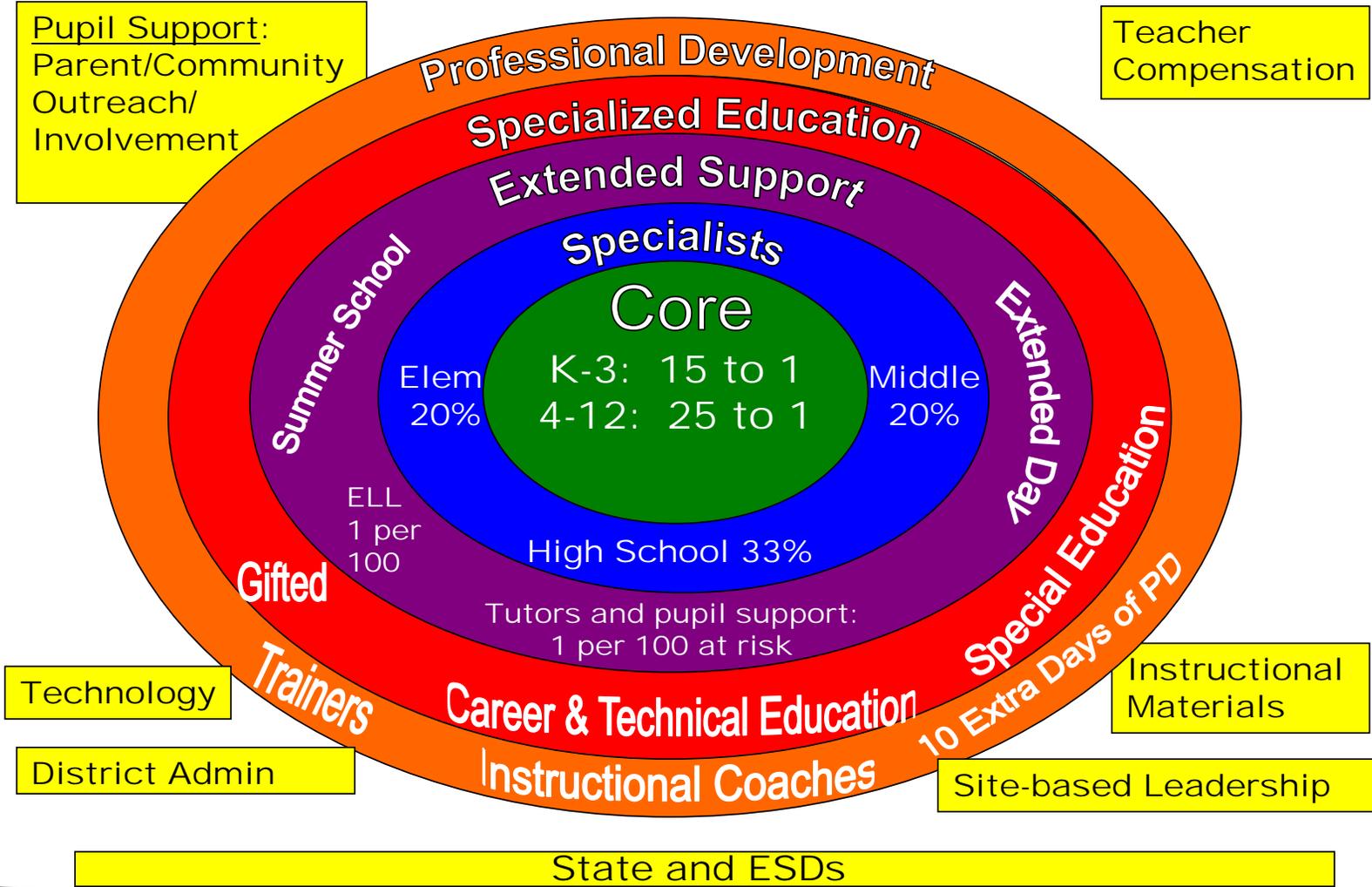
Our Process

- **We look at all aspects of schools**
- **We work with the broad spectrum of education officials**
- **We develop state-specific evidence-based models**
- **We help states design funding formulas that offer equity and adequacy**



The Evidence Based Model:

A Research Driven Approach to Linking Resources to Student Performance



Considerations for building a state school finance model

- **School-based cost estimation**
- **Distribution based on districts (Arkansas) or schools (Wyoming)**
- **Relative distribution of block and categorical grants**

Do Districts and Schools Spend New Dollars on These Key Resources?

- **Little existing evidence**
- **Inadequate fiscal reporting systems**
- **Current use of new dollars**
 - Higher teacher salaries
 - Smaller class size
 - Additional electives
 - Enhanced pupil support services
 - Instructional aides
- **But the real question is how do districts use all of their resources?**



Resource Use in Washington

Purposeful Sample of 9 Successful Districts

- **17** Elementary Schools
- **7** Middle Schools
- **6** High Schools
- **1** Pk-12 School

20,365 Students

- Average **33%** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch
- Average **11%** Special Education
- Average **8%** English Language Learners



Washington Findings

- **Successful schools used strategies similar to the Evidence-Based model**
 - They reallocated resources to implement these strategies
 - Mostly in reading and sometimes math
- **They chose these strategies based on their own review of research**
- **Limited curricular implementation was due to resource constraints**

Successful District Approach

- **Establish criteria and benchmarks for success**
- **Identify districts meeting criteria**
- **Estimate the average per pupil costs in those districts**
 - **Little variation in per pupil expenditures**
- **Consider adjustments**
 - **District and student characteristics**
 - **Outlier districts**



Criteria for Determining Success

- **Academic (total 11 criteria per year)**
 - **Percent proficient on WASL**
 - Math, Reading and Reading/writing
 - Grades 4, 7 & 10
 - **Learning growth index**
 - (WASL math and reading (2003-2006))
 - **Achievement gap**
 - (WASL math and reading (2003-2006))
- **Non-Academic (1 criterion per year)**
 - On-time graduation rate
- **Total of 36 criteria were analyzed**

Analyses

- **Analyzed districts meeting 36, 33, 30, 27, and 24 of the criteria**
- **District Subgroups**
 - **Quartiles of free and reduced-price lunch**
 - **District locale**
- **Compared district performance to both 2004-05 and 2007-08 benchmarks**

Districts Excluded from Study

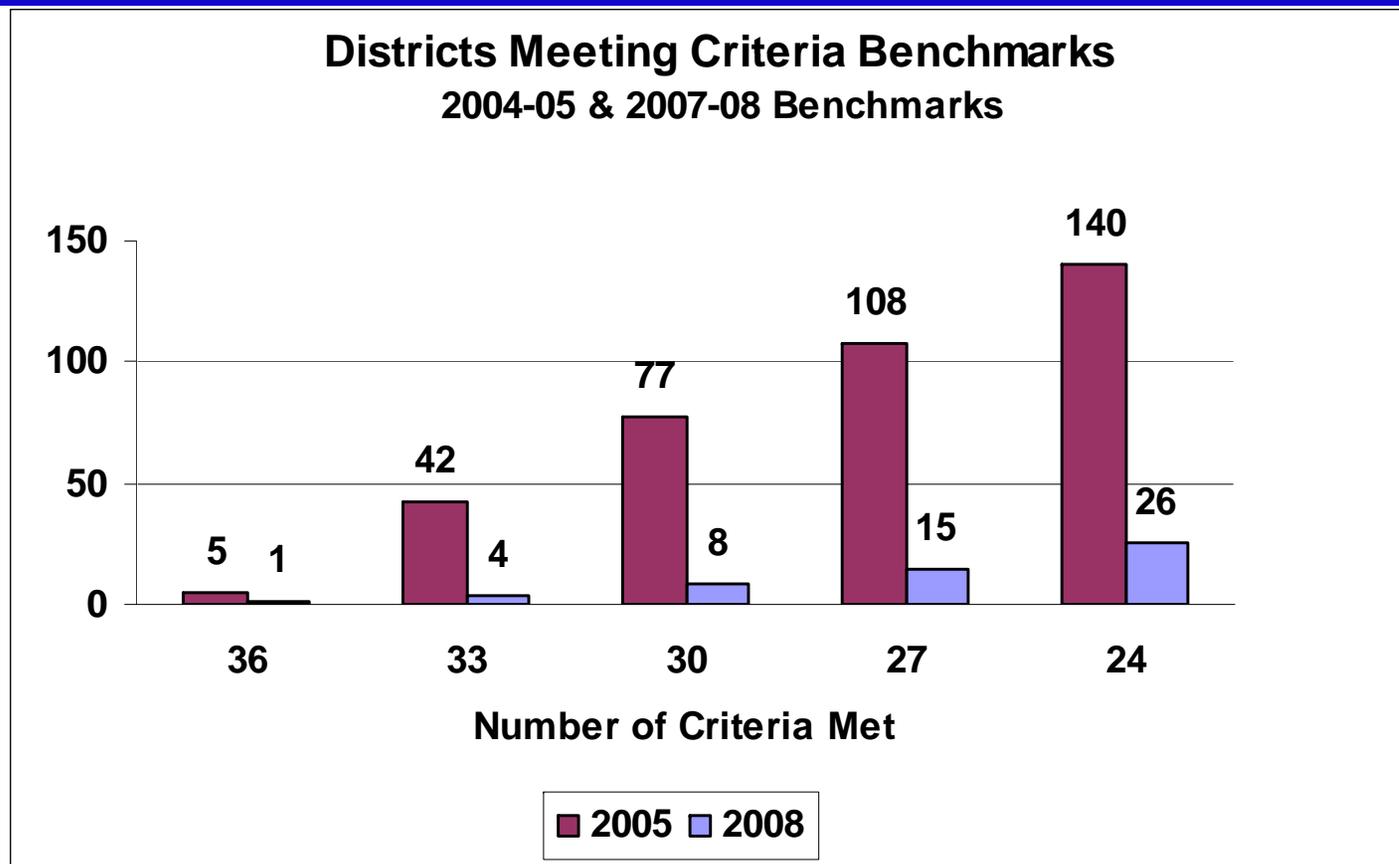
- **Districts that do not serve grades K-12**
- **Districts with fewer than 100 students**
- **Districts serving fewer than 10 students in a majority of subgroups**
- **This excludes:**
 - **63 of 296 districts (21%)**
 - **9,800 of 1.02 million students (1%)**

Final Sample of Districts

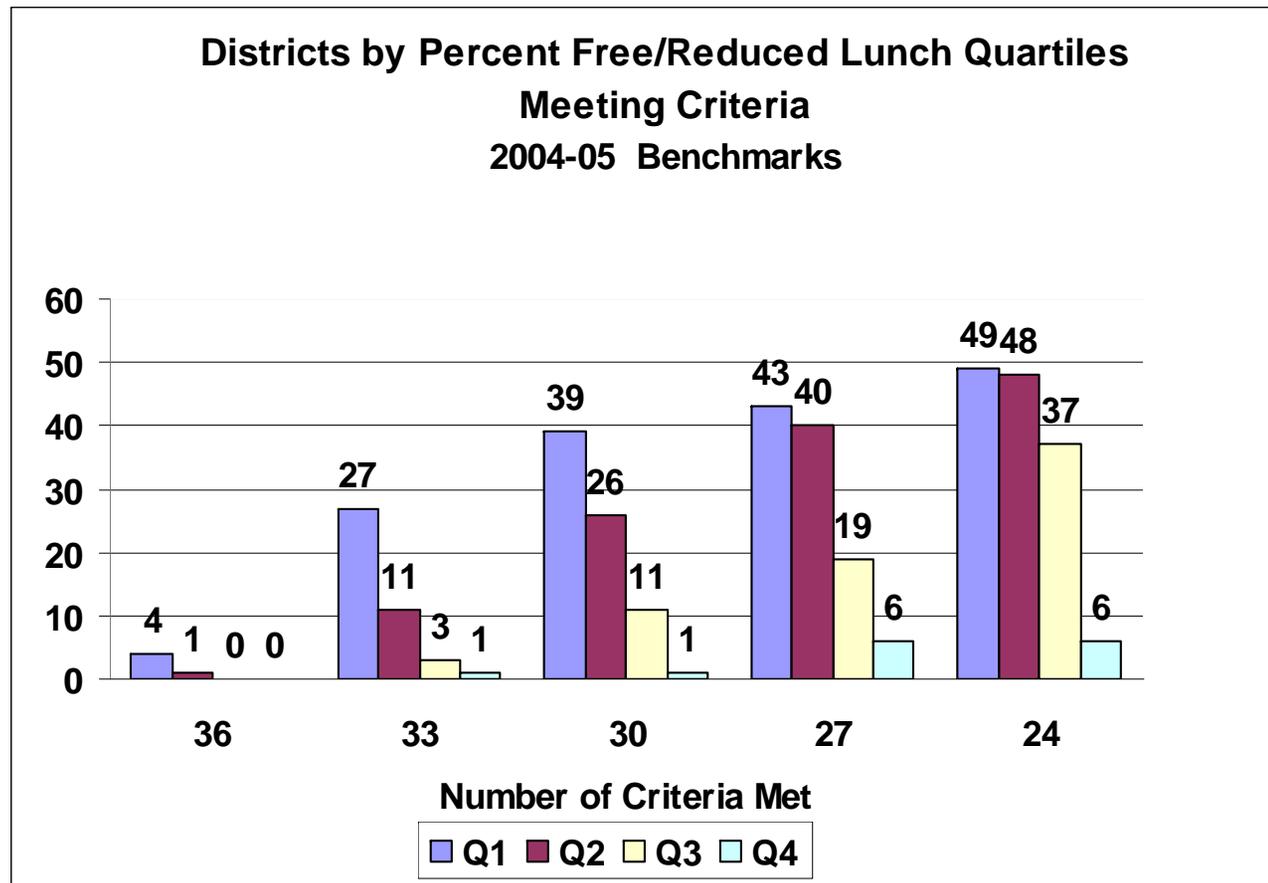
- **233 districts serving grades K-12**
 - 946,059 or 99% of students
- **Free & reduced price lunch quartiles**
 - Q1 = less than 26.3%, Q2 = 26.3%-39.6%, Q3 = 39.6%-52.9%, Q4 greater than 52.9%
- **Locale**
 - Urban – 21 districts
 - Suburban/Urban Fringe – 72 districts
 - Non-Urban City/Town – 27 districts
 - Rural – 113 districts

Performance on Benchmarks

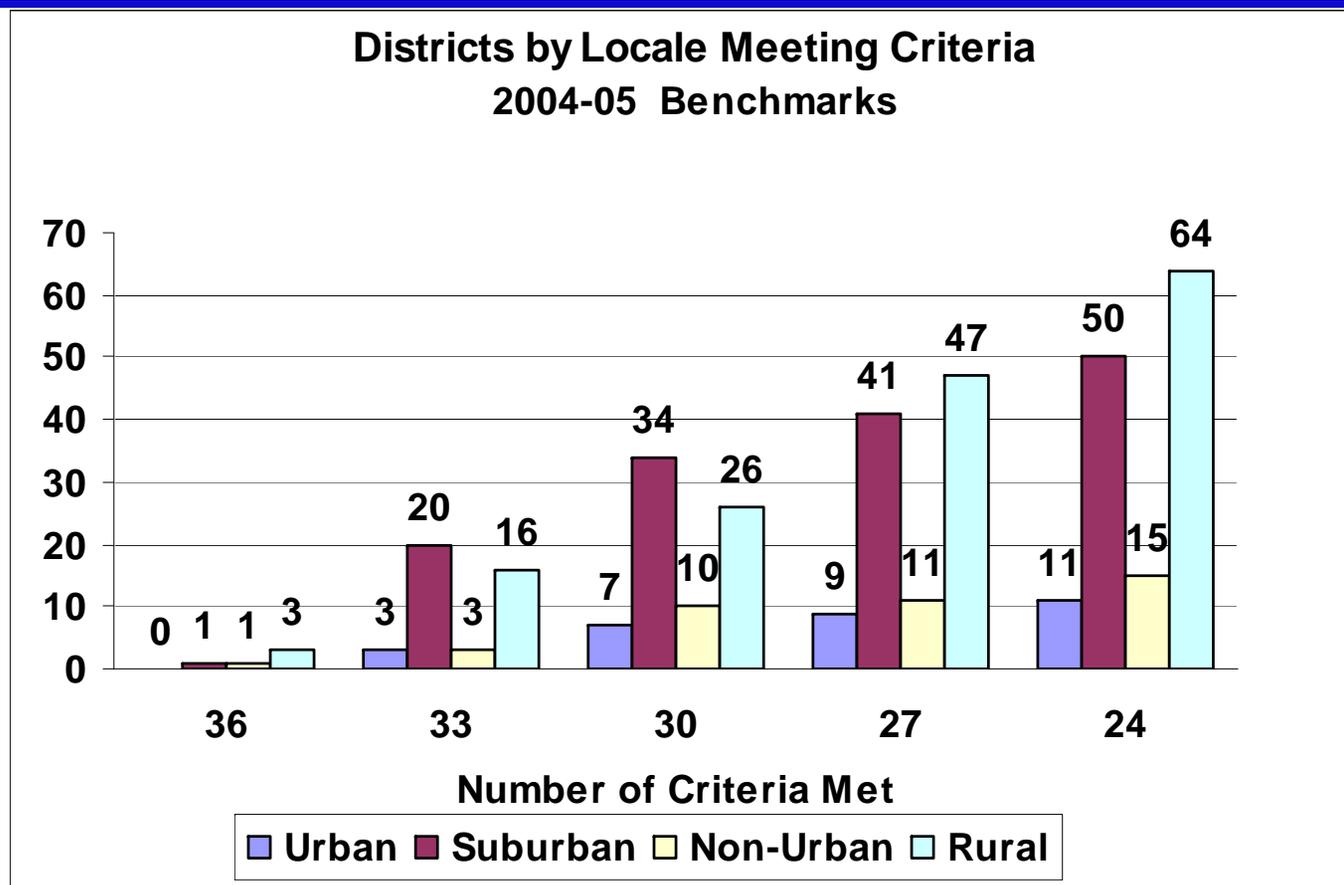
Number of Districts



Performance on 2004-05 Benchmarks Districts by Poverty Quartiles



Performance on 2004-05 Benchmarks Districts by Locale



Findings

WA Successful District Study

- **Washington's school districts face significant challenges in meeting current and future performance standards**

2004-05 Criteria

- Only 5 districts met all 36 2004-05 criteria
- Only a quarter met more than 30 out of 36 criteria
- Just over half met 25 or more criteria

2007-08 Criteria

- Only 1 district met all 36 2007-08 criteria
- Fewer than 10% of districts met 25 or more of the 2007-08 criteria

Findings

WA Successful District Study

- **Higher performing districts tend to have lower poverty and be suburban or more homogeneously rural**

2004-05 Criteria

- **No urban districts or districts from the top 2 poverty quartiles met all 36 criteria for 2004-05**
- **Only 1 of these districts met at least 30 criteria**
- **Only 6 districts from the top 2 poverty quartiles met at least 24 criteria for 2004-05**

2007-08 Criteria

- **Only 2 districts from the top 2 poverty quartiles met at least 27 criteria for 2007-08**
- **Only 2 urban districts met at least 24 of the 2007-08 criteria**

Findings

WA Successful District Study

- **District expenditures are generally equal**
- **Depending on number of criteria met or benchmarks used, average per pupil expenditures were:**
 - **Regular instruction expenditures per pupil - \$5,600 (Seven percent variation up or down)**
 - **Categorical programs - \$1,100 to \$1,300**
 - **Total State and Local - \$6,700 to \$7,100**
 - **Federal programs - \$225 to \$390**
 - **Total all funds - \$7,000 to \$7,300**

Findings

WA Successful District Study

- **Highest performing districts tended to spend slightly more per pupil**
 - Expenditures for regular instruction tended to be higher
 - Categorical spending tended to be lower
 - Property tax revenues were slightly higher than the average of \$1,481 per student – about \$200-\$300/pupil
 - Federal program spending was slightly lower

Findings

WA Successful District Study

- **Higher poverty districts spent more per pupil than lower poverty districts regardless of performance level**
- **Urban and rural districts also spent more per pupil than suburban districts**

Findings from Washington Arkansas and Wyoming

- **We studied 31 high performing schools in Washington**
- **We studied 107 Arkansas Schools**
- **We studied 187 Wyoming schools**
- **We will study all remaining schools in Wyoming this year**

Preliminary Findings Related to Instructional Improvement (WY)

- **Fewer core teachers than model funds at all levels**
- **Specialist Teachers**
 - **Elementary -- fewer than funded**
 - **Middle schools -- more than funded**
 - **High schools -- more than funded**
- **Large number of aides despite no funding**
- **Substantially fewer certified tutors than funded**

Preliminary Findings Related to Instructional Improvement (WY)

- **Instructional facilitators**
 - Observed at about the level funded in all three school levels
 - This is a categorical not a block grant program
- **School administrators employed at a slightly lower level than funded by the model**

Tentative Conclusions

- **The observed resource use patterns:**
 - **Appear to represent a different theory about how to boost student achievement**
 - **Less professional development**
 - **More electives**
 - **More classroom aides dealing with academic needs**
 - **Are different from evidence-based resource use patterns to double student performance observed in Wyoming and other states**

Few Schools Use Total Resources for Evidence-Based Reforms

- **Less focus on core subjects – more electives than in the model**
- **Limited professional development, under use of school-based instructional coaches**
- **Few tutors or other strategies to help struggling students**
- **Numerous instructional aides**

Key Implementation Challenges

- **Willingness to focus on “core” subjects not electives**
- **Sufficient sense of urgency**
- **Educator knowledge and belief in approaches**
- **Leadership to launch, support and fund these efforts**

Bottom Line

- **Evidence exists about how to improve schools – double performance in 4-7 years**
- **Costs of funding those strategies are reasonable**
- **Most states and districts can do this now**



What is Needed

A funding model that:

- **Includes staff positions that research and best practice identify as increasing student learning**
- **Provides incentives for schools to use such resources strategically**
- **Allows school officials some flexibility in meeting local needs**



Resources

- Odden, A.R. and Picus, L.O. (2008). *School Finance: A Policy Perspective, 4th edition*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. Available April 2007.
- Odden, A. and Wallace, M. (2007). *How to Create World Class Teacher Compensation*. Freeload Press (www.freeloadpress.com/bookDetail.aspx?bld=1077)
- Odden, A. and Archibald, S. (2001). *Reallocating Resources: How to Boost Student Achievement without Asking for More*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- See our state reports at www.lpicus.com

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