



Educational Service District 113

Providing Quality Service for Children

December 7, 2008

Dan Grimm, Chair
Basic Education Finance Joint Task Force
Washington State Institute for Public Policy
PO Box 40999
Olympia, WA 98504-0999

Dear Mr. Grimm,

I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to you and the task force members for the time, effort, and energy you have put into this project to address the problems with the State's current basic education funding formula. If implemented, the elements in the task force's draft report would result in significant improvement in that allocation model. Those improvements would help the K-12 system make significant strides in achieving its new mission to ensure success for all the State's students.

One of the proposals in that draft report raises concerns, however, which is the purpose of this letter. Sections 6.D. and 6.E. spell out a requirement for school districts to use a "common, state - developed and state - funded budgeting and accounting system" (p. 17), which includes "individual student standardized test performance, including scores on diagnostic and college readiness tests and a dropout early warning system." (p. 18).

While I understand that the legislature may believe it hasn't had the necessary data to inform sound decision-making, until SB 5843 passed in 2007 no state agency had legislative authority to collect the necessary data. As a result of that legislation this type of data collection is now in place and districts are complying. Given time for this new law to work, the legislature may find that the rich data they've been requesting is now available.

If your task force or the legislature doesn't feel this new collection will provide the needed data, I would strongly urge that you not "throw the baby out with the bath water." WSIPC, the statewide data cooperative which is operated by the state's ESDs is more than adequate to handle the State's needs for robust educational data. Rather than starting from scratch to implement a new system, I would urge use of this current system which is already deployed in 279 school districts. Of equal importance, there is already an effective network in place through the seven ESD regional data centers which provide training and support for current WSIPC users. While proposal 6.D. states that state funding should support system implementation and training, it would be very expensive and take significant time to replicate this robust support system that is already in place.

Thank you again for your leadership of this important task force and I hope you and the task force members will give serious consideration to the concerns addressed in this letter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bill Keim, Superintendent
Educational Service District 113