



November 2006

Inside this Brief

- **Background**
- **The Quality Education Model**
- **Prototype Schools**
- **Key Quality Indicators**
- **Best Practices**
- **Linking the Model to Student Performance**
- **Criticisms of the Model**
- **Funding Conclusions**
- **Staff and Agency Contacts**

Legislative Committee Services
State Capitol Building
Salem, Oregon 97301
(503) 986-1813

Background Brief on ...

Quality Education Model

Prepared by: Jim Keller

Background

How much does a quality education cost? Policymakers around the country are asking this question as states fund an increasing proportion of education costs and as those costs continue to climb.

In Oregon, passage of Ballot Measures 5, 47, and 50 shifted the primary responsibility of funding schools from local communities to the state. In response, the state has become more involved in determining how much money is adequate, leading, in turn, to an examination of how school districts spend their funds.

In 1997, Speaker of the House Lynn Lundquist appointed a committee to determine the cost of a quality education for every student, rather than basing funding decisions on historical levels and guesswork. The committee, consisting of educators, parents, business leaders and legislators, met over the next biennium in an attempt to craft a reliable tool on which to base a K-12 budget, one that would correlate funding with student performance. The committee presented its findings to the 1999 Legislative Assembly in the form of the Oregon Quality Education Model (available in the Legislative Library).

Supportive of the approach, Governor John Kitzhaber and State Schools Superintendent Stan Bunn appointed a Quality Education Commission in fall of 1999. As part of its work, that body offered a model that phased in the funding necessary to implement the model.

The 2001 Legislature continued this work by enacting House Bill 2295 (ORS 327.497- 327.506), which placed the Quality Education Commission (**QEC**) in statute and directed it to refine and update the model on an ongoing basis. That legislation directed the Governor to appoint, and the Senate confirm, an 11-member Quality Education Commission, which would be staffed by the Department of Education. The charge of the commission is as follows:

- Determine the level of funding sufficient to ensure the state K-12 education system meets the quality goals set forth in statute each biennium
- Identify best practices based on research, data, and professional judgment, and public values, and their costs
- Issue a report to the Governor and the Legislative Assembly prior to August 1 in even-numbered years identifying current practices,

costs, and expected performance, as well as best practices, costs, and expected performance under those practices

The Quality Education Model

The Quality Education Model (**QEM**) identifies components of a quality education, then estimates the cost of those components. The model is based on prototypical schools, encompasses the goals and requirements of the Oregon Education Act, and includes “key quality indicators.” The commission meets monthly to refine the model, and changes are reflected in the biennial report. Effort is made to track school district salaries and other expenses to make estimates as accurate as possible.

The model is not intended to be prescriptive, and schools are not required to adhere to the model’s components.

Prototype Schools

Three prototype schools—elementary, middle, and high—were created to determine the cost of a quality education. The prototype schools are based on certain assumptions.

Prototype School Assumptions:

- The size of each school is within a range the research shows is reasonable
- The assumed level of teacher experience is about average for schools in Oregon
- Each school has Internet access
- Teachers use technology for instruction delivery
- The school is close to an urban area
- The school is slightly below the state median in socioeconomic status (40th percentile)
- The school has identified approximately 13 percent of their students for special education
- 10 percent of students are identified as speaking English as a second language
- The principal is supportive of reform goals
- The principal is somewhat skilled as a leader and manager
- Teachers are open to reform goals
- Teachers possess content knowledge necessary to teach to applicable state standards

In Each Prototype School:

- Adequate staffing
- Added instructional time and activities for students having trouble meeting standards
- Curriculum development and technology support
- On-site instructional improvement
- Professional development for teachers and administrators
- Assistance with Certificate of Initial Mastery (**CIM**) record keeping
- Adequate classroom supplies
- Adequate funds for building maintenance

Elementary School – 340 students:

- All-day kindergarten
- Class size average of 20 in grades 1-3, class size of 24 in grades 4-5
- 16 full-time K-5 classroom teachers
- 4.5 full-time specialists in areas such as art, music, P.E., reading, math, TAG, library, second language, or child development
- At least 90 percent students meeting reading and math standards by 2014

Middle School – 500 students

- Average class size of 22 in core academic courses, with maximum class size of 29
- 21 full-time classroom teachers in core subjects
- 1 additional teacher for math, English, science
- Alternative programs for special needs and at-risk students
- Volunteer coordinator and community outreach worker
- 1 counselor for every 250 students
- Adequate campus security
- At least 90 percent students meeting reading and math standards by 2014

High School – 1000 students:

- Average class size of 21 in core academic courses, with a maximum class size of 29
- 44 full-time classroom teachers in core subjects
- 3.0 additional teachers for math, English, science
- Alternative programs for special needs and at-risk students
- Volunteer coordinator and community outreach worker
- One counselor for every 250 students
- Adequate campus security
- School-to-work coordinator

- 82 percent students meeting reading and 75 percent meeting math standards by 2014

Key Quality Indicators

The model assumes that the prototype schools have certain characteristics, traits independent from monetary funding. These characteristics include the following:

- Leadership that facilitates student learning
- Parental/Community involvement
- Organizational adaptability
- A safe and orderly environment
- A district with aligned curriculum and maximum allocation of resources to the classroom
- Effective teachers
- Student connectedness to school

Best Practices

The QEC is also charged with identifying “best practices” for instruction. Examples of best practices identified in the report include personalized education programs, small learning environments, cost-effective management of resources, use of community-based and worksite learning, and a rich and varied elective co-curricular and extra-curricular program.

Linking QEM to Student Performance

The original QEM report stated that the model builds a relationship between funding and performance. “It demonstrates that a certain level of funding can be reasonably associated with a certain level of student performance.”¹ The expected outcome of full funding of the model was that “schools would be expected to demonstrate rapid, sustained improvement in student scores on state assessments, performance tasks, and work samples until 90 percent are at benchmark or receive the CIM with the remaining 10 percent making significant progress to be as near to reaching the standard as possible.”²

The 2006 QEM forecasts that with full implementation of the model, the percentage of students meeting the reading standard in by 2014

will be 97% of 3rd graders, 96 percent of 5th graders, 91 percent of 8th graders and 82 percent of 10th graders. The percentages of students meeting the math standard in that year are predicted to be 97 percent of 3rd graders, 96 percent of 5th graders, 92 percent of 8th graders, and 75 percent of 10th graders.³

Criticisms of the Model

When the model was released in 1999, House Speaker Lynn Snodgrass appointed a committee to review the model.

Reaction to the model was mixed. Some were supportive of an approach that tried to take an objective view of the school funding debate, and believed the model’s premise was sound. Others found areas of fault, such as all costs for full implementation is not part of the recommended funding level and linking funding with student achievement, particularly with a model based on (potentially flawed) existing practices. Even if there was agreement on best practices, actual schools are not required to use the funds as recommended by the QEM.

Partially in response to criticisms, when the commission was codified in statute a direction to the commission to research and include “best practices” in education was added to the model.

Funding Conclusions

For the 2005-07 biennium, costs for full implementation of the model was estimated to be \$7.1 billion in state resources. This level of funding would result in a per student (weighted) funding of \$6,539 the first year of the biennium and \$6,782 in the second year.

The 2005 Legislature funded education for the 2005-07 biennium at \$5.3 billion, or \$1.8 billion below the level recommended by the QEM.

For the 2007-09 biennium, recommended funding for full implementation of the QEM are estimated to be \$7.9 billion in state resources.

Information about the Quality Education Model
may be found at:
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=166>

Staff and Agency Contacts

Brian Reeder, Oregon Department of Education
503-947-5670

Jan McComb, Oregon Department of Education
503-947-5616

Jim Keller, Legislative Committee Services
503-986-1644

¹ The Oregon Quality Education Model, 1999.

² Ibid. p. 43

³ 2006 Preliminary QEM Report

*Brian Reeder, Department of Education, assisted with
the development of this document.*