

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Costing-Out Study Committee

Progress Report – July 19, 2007

Note:

The Costing-Out Study is proceeding on schedule, and the State Board's contractors expect to deliver the final report as scheduled in November. **Bold type below indicates additional activities since the last meeting of the State Board on May 16-17.**

General Information:

1. Following a review of proposals submitted in response to an RFP, the Board contracted with Augenblick, Palaich and Associates in Denver in December.
2. The Board's Costing-Out Study Committee reviewed APA's proposal and the Board's expectations with the contractor in December. Central to these expectations are a need for the study to be independent and free from political influence and a need for the Board to be as open as possible with stakeholders and the public as the study progresses.
3. The Board contracted with EdStrat21, a Harrisburg-based education strategies and project management consulting firm for the services of its president, Dr. Robert Feir, to serve as the Board's project manager.
4. APA personnel and the Board's Costing-Out Study Committee met with an extensive group of stakeholders in January. The stakeholder meeting was designed for the consultants to provide interested groups with information about the study and to hear issues and concerns from the groups. In addition, several of the groups were asked to nominate school personnel to serve on professional judgment panels (see below).
5. Some of the work is being done by APA subcontractors, and APA reports that they are on schedule and that their work is being managed as planned.
6. The State Board's project manager spent two days in March meeting with APA staff in Denver and reports that the project seems to be on schedule without any significant problems.
7. APA personnel briefed both the State Board Costing-Out Study Committee and representatives of several education organizations in Harrisburg on April 19.
8. **APA issued its interim report to the State Board on May 16. It has been posted on the Board's website and distributed to key stakeholders.**

Data:

APA has requested detailed and voluminous data on school district revenues, expenditures, students, personnel, programs, and both school and community contextual variables. Virtually all of the data have been gathered and transmitted to APA.

Study Approaches:

1. Successful Districts: APA has **begun the analysis of successful district spending** and is **preparing to hold discussions with a subset of these districts that are high-performing and low-spending**, as required by Act 114 of 2006.
2. Professional Judgment: The State Board's project manager coordinated an elaborate statewide process of nominating education practitioners to serve on professional judgment panels. Nominations were received from all the major education groups, along

with a number of self-nominations and others from various advocacy groups. APA reviewed lists of nominees to establish panels based upon a good balance of regional representation and district size. Three panel meetings (focused on school-level resource needs) were held in late March in Harrisburg. Two others (focused on resource needs for special needs students) were held in Harrisburg in April. **Four panels (focused on district-level resource needs) were held May 8-11 in King of Prussia and Pittsburgh.** The panels include educators from all nine regions of the state. **The final statewide panel will be conducted in Harrisburg next month.**

3. Evidence-Based: APA and its subcontractors at the University of Oregon developed a number of research-based school improvement scenarios generally thought to help students increase academic achievement. These were turned into a web-based simulation in which about 50-100 Pennsylvanians (educators and others) have been asked to respond to each of the improvement approaches and the costs associated with them. **This web-based activity began in June and should conclude later this month.**
4. **Cost Function: This econometric approach is nearing completion by APA's subcontractors at New York University.**
5. **In addition to the four approaches included in the contract, APA concluded a series of meetings with school board members, business representatives, and parents in the six regions in which professional judgment panels are not scheduled.**
6. **In addition to the professional judgment panels, APA and the State Board project manager met with several career-technology center directors and separately with several intermediate unit executive directors and business officials in King of Prussia on June 13.**

Meetings/Presentations:

1. The Board's committee and APA staff met with the Stakeholders Group on January 24 (see above).
2. Dr. Feir made a presentation to the board of the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools in State College on February 9.
3. Dr. Feir participated on a panel on school finance issues conducted by Good Schools Pennsylvania in Lancaster on February 22.
4. Dr. James Barker, chair of the Board's Costing-Out Study Committee, and Dr. Feir made a joint presentation to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association annual legislative meeting in Hershey on February 25.
5. Jim Buckheit and Dr. Feir gave a briefing to legislative staff on March 8.
6. Dr. Feir made a presentation to the Capital Area Intermediate Unit superintendents in Summerdale on March 14.
7. Dr. Feir made a presentation to the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials in Pittsburgh on March 15.
8. Karl Girton participated on a panel on school finance issues conducted by Good Schools Pennsylvania in Lebanon on March 22.
9. APA personnel briefed both the State Board Costing-Out Study Committee and representatives of several education organizations in Harrisburg on April 19.
10. Mr. Buckheit participated on a panel on school finance issues conducted by Good Schools Pennsylvania in Carlisle on April 19.
11. Dr. Feir participated on a panel on school finance issues conducted by Good Schools Pennsylvania in York on April 26.

12. **Dr. Feir made a presentation to the senior staff of the Pennsylvania State Education Association in Harrisburg on June 6.**
13. **John Myers of APA's staff and Dr. Feir were the only two witnesses at a public hearing held by the House Republican Policy Committee in York on June 7.**
14. **Dr. Feir made a presentation to the Good Schools Pennsylvania summer school class in Lancaster on July 18.**
15. **Dr. Feir is scheduled to make a presentation to the Education Committee of the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board in Allentown on July 20.**
16. **Dr. Feir is scheduled to make a presentation to the Good Schools Pennsylvania summer school class in Reading on August 14.**
17. **Dr. Feir is scheduled to make a presentation to the board of directors of the Pennsylvania League of Urban Schools in Harrisburg on September 19.**