

Memo: To Working Group 3

From: Buzzy Hettleman

Re: Proposed amendments

Oct. 7, 2018

Two amendments are proposed. These were by and large submitted previously to WG 4 but I believe fell through the cracks. They – and comments by a number of groups on the subjects of tutoring and other supports for struggling learners – were referred to WG 3 but, as best I understand, were not reviewed by WG 3 (or WG 4).

Amendment 1: the tutor-student ratio (p. 9, para. 7 of last draft)

Strike the words “one tutor to serve up to 125” and substitute “evidence-based tutoring at a tutor-to-student ratio to be further determined.”

Rationale: The tutor-to-student ratio of 1:125 proposed by APA (in its Evidence Base section on “Resources for students at risk of academic failure,” and recommendation for the Compensatory Education weight) has never been justified by any specific calculation. The WG 3 draft references several funding sources but not any detailed justification for the proposed ratio.

A calculation of the evidence-based ratio would take into account several variables, such as the extent to which students are below proficiency, the intensity and duration of the tutoring, and program models, including tutor-to-student ratios. Dr. Robert Slavin in his presentation to the Commission provided a template (regardless of his specific cost estimates) for such a calculation.

There is overwhelming evidence that the 1:125 ratio is not supported by research. It is not aligned even with the research cited by APA, as well as the extensive other research available. Further, while APA estimated the tutoring ratio within an RTI framework, it only considered tutoring in Tier 2, omitting Tier 3 though almost all RTI frameworks, including that recommended by MSDE, include three tiers.

As suggested in the WG 3 draft, the calculation of the tutoring ratio in the K-3 literacy program should take into consideration funds (and positions) that would be available through the Base and Compensatory Education weight.¹ But a specific calculation of an evidence-based ratio is still required.

¹ The WG 3 draft also suggests taking into account the Concentrated Poverty funding but this would be at odds, I believe, with the basic purpose of the Concentrated Poverty funds. The basic purpose of the Concentrated Poverty funding, as I understand, is to provide additional resources over and above the Base and other weights because of the additional impact of concentrated poverty.

The calculation should be based on the current literacy needs of students who are below proficiency. In addition, there should be a projection of the phase-in and phase-down from savings of the tutoring over the transitional period of 6 to 8 years; this will greatly reduce projected costs.

Amendment 2: “Additional Supports for Struggling Learners”

Add a Design Element that recognizes, as the body of the WG 3 draft does, the need for “Additional Supports for Struggling Learners” in addition to the K-3 literacy tutoring.(see Appendix I below).

Rationale: Beyond the K-3 literacy program, the WG 3 draft calls for much more in the way of supports for struggling learners. It starts with the draft’s “guiding principle.” “all students who are below proficiency in the foundational skills of literacy and math should receive additional support using a wide variety of evidence-based programs and strategies.” Further, for example, the draft refers to support needed for “students who continue to need tutoring beyond third grade;” to “early warning systems and getting students back on track; and assistance for students “Starting in middle school [who are] likely not to meet the CCR standard by the end of the 10th grade.”

Yet, these additional supports are not specified. What “evidence-based programs and strategies” at what cost?

Consistent with the usual methodology for determining a Compensatory Education weight, the Additional Supports would appear to fall into two major categories.

- a. *Tutoring in literacy and math for all students below proficiency in grades K-12, less the transitional tutoring program in literacy in Grades K-3.* Included also would be the Additional Supports –unspecified so far – that Work Group 3 proposes for students who, beginning in middle school, are in danger of not meet CCR standards.
- b. *Other Additional Supports beyond tutoring, such as before and after school, summer school and pupil support (behavioral and social-emotional) largely addressed in the APA section on “Resources for students at risk of academic failure.”*

There is an apparent overlap or duplication between the design and costing out of these Additional Supports and the determination of the Compensatory Education weight.² Consideration of this proposed Design Element could therefore be deferred until full, itemized consideration of the Compensatory Education weight.

² Note, however, that the Commission has sought to include all struggling learners as at-risk whereas the APA methodology limits the Compensatory Education weight to students in poverty.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT DESIGN ELEMENT: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS

Element: Additional Supports for Struggling Learners. All students in grades K-12 who are below proficiency in the foundational skills of literacy and math should receive additional supports using a wide variety of evidence-based programs and strategies.

Design Assumptions:

1. Additional Supports supplement policies and programs in the Base and other categorical programs, and are customarily estimated and included in the determination of a Compensatory Education Weight.
2. The Additional Supports programs and strategies, consistent with the usual methodology for determining a Compensatory Education weight, would appear to fall into two major categories.
 - c. Tutoring in literacy and math for all students below proficiency in grades K-12, less the transitional tutoring program in literacy in Grades K-3. (That is, literacy tutoring in grades 4-12 and math tutoring in grades K-12 must still be estimated.) Included also would be the Additional Supports –unspecified so far – that Work Group 3 proposes for students who, beginning in middle school, are in danger of not meet CCR standards.
 - d. Other Additional Supports beyond tutoring, such as before and after school, summer school and pupil support (behavioral and social-emotional) largely addressed in the APA section on “Resources for students at risk of academic failure.”
3. Projections of the cost estimates of Additional Supports should be made over a minimum period of six years to allow annual or bi-annual cost adjustments. The cost adjustments would reflect such factors as: phase-in of implementation; the impact of the Additional Supports (and other policies and programs recommended by the Commission) in reducing the need for Additional Supports in general education and special education; and effectiveness data from an accountability system that incorporates the components of ongoing R & D.
4. The funding for Additional Supports for Struggling Learners would be net of other funding (e.g. the Base, categorical programs like the transitional tutoring in literacy in grades K-3, and, depending on how it is calculated, the Compensatory Education weight) recommended by the Commission that directly provide such Additional Supports.