



LPRO: Legislative Policy and Research Office

# QUALITY EDUCATION MODEL

## BACKGROUND BRIEF

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 these 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, resulting in 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 kindergarten through grade twelve (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.

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

The 2001 Legislative Assembly continued this work by enacting House Bill 2295 (ORS 327.497 to 327.506), that established the 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 to confirm, an 11-member QEC to be staffed by the Oregon Department of Education. The charge of the QEC 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; and

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- Issue a report to the Governor and the Legislative Assembly prior to August 1<sup>st</sup> 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

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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, including the goals and requirements of the Oregon Education Act, and “key quality indicators.” The QEC meets monthly to refine the model and changes are reflected in the biennial report. It tracks school district salaries and other expenses to make estimates as accurate as possible.

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

## PROTOTYPE SCHOOLS

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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 that research shows is efficient;
- 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 (40<sup>th</sup> percentile);
- The school has identified approximately 13 percent of its students for special education;
- 11 percent of students are identified as English language learners;
- The principal is supportive of reform goals;
- The principal is somewhat skilled as a leader and manager;
- Teachers are open to reform goals; and
- 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;
- Adequate classroom supplies; and
- 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; and
- 4.5 full-time specialists in areas such as art, music, physical education, reading, math, Talented and Gifted, library, second language or child development.



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## MIDDLE SCHOOL – 500 STUDENTS:

- Average class size of 22;
- 1.5 additional teachers for math, English and science;
- Alternative programs for special needs and at-risk students;
- Volunteer coordinator and community outreach worker;
- One counselor for every 250 students; and
- Adequate campus security.

## HIGH SCHOOL – 1,000 STUDENTS:

- Average class size of 21;
- Three additional teachers for math, English and 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; and
- School-to-work coordinator.

## KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

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The model assumes that the prototype schools have certain characteristics and traits that are 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; and
- Student connectedness to school.

## BEST PRACTICES

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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 THE MODEL TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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The original QEM report issued in 1999 stated that the model would build 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.” 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 Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) with the remaining 10 percent making significant progress to be as near to reaching the standard as possible.” Although the CIM has been repealed, its standards have been incorporated into new high school diploma requirements. With the adoption of Oregon’s 40-40-20 goals, the current version of the model also focuses on high school graduation as one of the key measures of student performance.

The 2014 QEM evaluated five initiatives with the potential for significantly impacting high school graduation rates. These included:



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- Early reading;
- Increasing the graduation rate of boys;
- Increasing the graduation rate of economically disadvantaged students;
- Increasing attendance rates; and
- Having all students on track to graduate by 9th grade.

The report noted the potential impact of investments in each area and the time required to realize those results.

## REACTIONS TO THE MODEL

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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 not being 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 is 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 QEC was codified in statute, direction to the QEC included research and inclusion of educational "best practices" in the QEM.

## FUNDING CONCLUSIONS

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For the 2015-17 biennium, costs for full implementation of the model were estimated to be \$9.158 billion in state resources. An additional \$28.5 million required to implement full-day kindergarten based on a revised QEC estimate brought that total to \$9.187 billion. The 2015 Legislative Assembly's appropriation for public K-12 education for the 2015-2017 biennium was \$7.373 billion, \$1.814 billion below the level recommended by the QEM.

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## STAFF CONTACT

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Legislative Policy and Research Office  
503-986-1813

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

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