

**Appendix I:**  
**District Request for Documents (RFD)**  
**for the Study of**  
**Weighted Student Funding (WSF) and**  
**School-Based Budgeting (SBB) Systems**

# **Study of Weighted Student Funding Systems**

---

## **Request for Documents (RFD) From Case Study Districts**

**Fall 2017**

Dear [NAME],

Your district has been selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's Study of Weighted Student Funding (WSF) and School-Based Budgeting (SBB) Systems, an important new study examining how districts allocate funds and resources to their schools. The purpose of this study, being conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR), is to understand the variation in implementation of school-based budgeting practices and weighted student formulas; the outcomes in terms of the levels of principal autonomy, transparency of resource allocation, and equity of resource distribution; the interactions of WSF and SBB systems with school choice policies; and the challenges each district may have faced in undertaking such changes to their budgeting and planning systems.

As part of this study, we are collecting data and documentation on weighted student funding systems and school expenditures from nine case study districts across the nation. This Request for Documents (RFD) describes the documents that we would like to obtain from your district to carry out the goals of the study. We expect this request will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

In the next week, you will receive a follow-up email or phone call from our team to talk with you to:

- identify members of your staff who can provide specific information and determine when and how they could most easily be submitted;
- review the data items that are being requested and identify the data format that is least burdensome for your district to provide; and
- clarify any concerns and answer any questions you may have regarding the study.

We also will be conducting interviews with key district and school staff in your district, so the follow-up call may also be used to schedule these interviews if that is easiest.

**IMPORTANT:** Please do not forward any data files or documents until you have spoken with the AIR data collector to clarify any questions surrounding those items requested below.

**How will this data be used?**

Please be aware that these data will be used to supplement what is learned from interviews during case study site visits, to describe how WSF systems have been implemented in each case study district and how school and district budgets and expenditures may look different before and after WSF implementation. Districts will be named in study reports.

The study team will make sure that access to all data with identifiable information is limited to members of the study team.

## Documents, Data and Materials Requested

We are requesting the following documents and materials:

- 1. Materials describing the annual school-level budgeting/planning process.** We are interested in any documents you can share that explain how school budgets in your district are developed annually, who is involved, and how resource allocation decisions are made. Ideally, this information would include a description of the weighted student funding formula, the types of services and staff/non-personnel resources the central district office provides to schools, a list of personnel and non-personnel resources that are under the discretion of the school principal, and any guidance to principals regarding budgeting and planning. If this has changed over the past *five years*, please include historical as well as current documents.
- 2. Documentation of the weighted student funding formula.** We are interested in any documents that describe how funds are distributed to schools, including base per pupil amounts, funding weights for particular groups of students or other factors related to the cost of services, the identification of revenue sources that are distributed through the WSF system, any hold harmless agreements/provisions that have been established, and any other information you think might be helpful for us to understand your system and processes. If any of these have changed over the past *five years*, please include historical as well as current documents.
- 3. Complete school-level budgets** for three years before WSF implementation, and all years since WSF implementation. We are interested in understanding planned spending in schools in your district before and after WSF implementation. If your district is small (i.e., fewer than 10 schools), we would like to request budgets from all schools. If your district is larger, we will work with you to request budgets from a sample of schools representing different levels of student need and schooling levels. If your district began implementing WSF *before 2010*, we will work with you to request budgets from a sample of WSF years.
- 4. Audited expenditure files** for your district for five years before WSF implementation, and all years since WSF implementation. In these files, please include the standard codes used in your chart of accounts (object, function, etc.) and site codes that identify individual schools. We are interested in understanding expenditures overall and by school in your district before and after WSF implementation.
- 5. Chart of Accounts.** Lists of the chart of accounts codes for your district covering all budget and expenditure file years requested. To interpret and analyze budgets and audited expenditures, we are requesting from schools in your district who are participating in the study, we would like to request the account codes used by your district (e.g., State Accounting Manual) and/or district—particularly the revenue and fund codes, object of expenditure codes, and function codes. If the current chart of accounts differs from the fiscal years covered in the expenditure and budget files you share with us, please provide a chart of accounts for prior years as appropriate.
- 6. School Enrollments.** School enrollment figures for each of the schools in your district for each school year for which you are providing a budget and/or audited expenditure files, by student category. We would like to know total student enrollment for these schools so that we can understand budgeted expenditures (being requested from schools directly) in per-pupil terms. We are also interested in counts of students in each category that your WSF formula considers in allocating funds.
- 7. Any other written documentation.** It would also be useful for us to see any other written planning documentation, budget narratives, or funding applications related to your district's weighted student funding system.

## Submission of data files/documents

Once you or members of your staff have gathered this requested information, please forward them to your data collector. We would prefer electronic files when possible, but please send us the information in whatever form it is available.

**Option 1: *Electronic files.*** Data can be in spreadsheet (e.g., Excel) or word processing files (e.g., MS Word). Please indicate the type of file and format (Windows/Macintosh). Data files can then be uploaded to a secure website that will be provided via email after the initial follow-up conversation with an AIR data collector.

**Option 2: *Pre-existing printed reports.*** Hard copies may be sent via mail or FedEx; please contact Vaibhav Jain at [vjain@air.org](mailto:vjain@air.org) or 202- 403-5675 if a pre-paid, addressed FedEx envelope is needed.

***If returning materials to us by mail, please return to:***

***Study of Weighted Student Funding Systems***  
Attn: Karen Manship  
American Institutes for Research (AIR)  
2800 Campus Drive, Suite 200  
San Mateo, CA 94403

**Questions or concerns? Please call Karen Manship at 650-376-6398.**

***Thank you for your time and assistance with this study!***

---

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number of this information collection is XXXX-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 45 minutes. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimates(s) or suggestion for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, 20202-4651. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to:

Policy and Program Studies Service, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development,  
U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202.