

RCW 28A.300.805 K-3 class size reduction construction grant pilot program—Classroom counting method and funding formula—Prioritizing grant applications—Recommendations—Annual reports. (1)

The legislature recognizes that the provisions of the K-3 class size reduction construction grant pilot program will need modifications to (a) ensure that the grant program will meet the program's objectives for all school districts needing additional classrooms, and (b) identify changes to the school construction assistance program to improve appropriate coordination between the two grant programs.

(2) In consultation with stakeholders, the office of financial management, and the appropriate committees of the legislature, the superintendent of public instruction shall develop (a) an improved method for calculating needed classrooms, and (b) an improved funding formula for calculating grant awards to meet the objectives of this section and *RCW 28A.525.058. The classroom counting method and funding formula must be informed by data collected in state studies and surveys or through inventory and condition assessments conducted by the Washington State University extension energy office. The improved classroom counting method and improved funding formula, and any other requirements of this section, must be reported to the office of financial management and the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2015.

(3) (a) The improved classroom counting method must:

(i) Demonstrate a lack of sufficient classroom space district-wide to meet K-3 class size ratios as funded pursuant to average class size objectives for the 2017-18 school year enumerated in RCW 28A.150.260 in effect as of October 31, 2014, and to provide all-day kindergarten as funded pursuant to RCW 28A.150.315. The determination that there is a lack of sufficient space must be based on data collected in a state study and survey conducted within the preceding six years from the date of grant application or data collected through an inventory and condition assessment validated by the Washington State University extension energy office within the preceding six years from the date of grant application;

(ii) For school districts with student head count enrollments more than forty-eight thousand, the improved classroom counting method must demonstrate a lack of sufficient classroom space within subdistrict areas in order to account for rapid growth in certain areas of a district that should be met with classroom capacity in those certain areas to avoid prolonged bussing of elementary students.

(b) The improved classroom counting method must be designed to ensure that additional classrooms will achieve average class size objectives for the 2017-18 school year enumerated in RCW 28A.150.260 in effect as of October 31, 2014, and all-day kindergarten as funded pursuant to RCW 28A.150.315.

(4) (a) In consultation with stakeholders, the office of financial management, and the appropriate committees of the legislature, the superintendent of public instruction must also recommend a process for prioritizing grant applications. The prioritization process must produce one prioritized list of grant recipients that includes all of the projects requested by school districts, and report the list, including preliminary estimates of necessary added classrooms, to the office of financial management and the appropriate committees of the legislature.

(b) The prioritized list must consider the following priorities:

- (i) Applicants with high student to teacher ratios in kindergarten through third grades;
- (ii) Applicants with a high percentage of students who are eligible and enrolled in the free and reduced-price meals program;
- (iii) Applicants that have not raised capital funds through levies or bonds in the prior ten-year period;
- (iv) Other criteria that relate to the objectives of the grant program.

(5) The improved funding formula must consider options for enhanced state funding for school districts that have not raised capital funds through levies or bonds in the prior ten-year period.

(6) In consultation with stakeholders, the office of financial management, and the appropriate committees of the legislature, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must recommend statutory and rule changes to ensure appropriate coordination between the K-3 class size reduction construction grant program and the school construction assistance program. The recommendation must include ways to ensure that new square footage funded through this grant program does not impair a school district's eligibility for modernization or replacement grants through the school construction assistance program eligibility under RCW 28A.525.166.

(7) In consultation with stakeholders, the office of financial management, and the appropriate committees of the legislature, the superintendent of public instruction must recommend the content and method for reporting annually on the grants awarded during each fiscal year. The report must include, at least, the grant amounts and the status of all awarded grants by school district. The annual report must also include data documenting actual class size reductions and all-day kindergarten achieved in school districts that have received grants provided under this section. Beginning in 2016, the report must be submitted to the office of financial management and the appropriate committees of the legislature by October 1st for the preceding fiscal year and made available to the public on a website maintained by the superintendent of public instruction.

(8) In consultation with stakeholders, the office of financial management, and the appropriate committees of the legislature, the superintendent of public instruction must recommend statutory and rule changes for awarding grants for construction, modernization, or replacement of school facilities with an expected useful life of less than thirty years. [2015 3rd sp.s. c 41 § 301.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 28A.525.058 expired July 1, 2017.

Findings—Intent—2015 3rd sp.s. c 41: "(1) The legislature finds that local school districts design, build, own, and manage public school facilities. The Washington state Constitution provides two ways to fund construction of public school facilities. First, the state Constitution provides the means for school districts to finance school construction. Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution authorizes school districts to collect capital levies to support the construction, remodeling, or modernization of school facilities. In addition, Article VIII, section 6 of the state Constitution authorizes school districts to incur debt up to eleven and one-half percent of the total assessed value of taxable property for school construction and Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution authorizes school districts to pay for this debt by issuing general obligation bonds for these capital purposes. Second, Article IX, section 3 of the state

Constitution establishes the common school construction fund and dedicates revenues derived from school and state trust lands and earnings of the permanent common school fund to funding common school construction. Beyond these constitutional means, the legislature provides further state assistance to school districts through the issuance of general obligation bonds, the proceeds of which the state appropriates to support the state school construction assistance grant program established in chapter 28A.525 RCW. This state grant program is not intended to replace the financing provisions established in the state Constitution, but rather to provide state assistance that supplements the constitutional financing provisions. The state grant program helps finance new school capacity to accommodate enrollment growth and to modernize and replace existing schools while respecting local decisions and control by locally elected school boards.

(2) The legislature also finds that some school districts may benefit from additional financial assistance to provide school facilities—beyond that which is provided through the school construction assistance grant program—for the purpose of constructing or acquiring additional classrooms to support state-funded all-day kindergarten and class size reduction in kindergarten through third grade.

(3) For the 2015-2017 biennium, the legislature intends to provide additional state financial assistance to help school districts in funding public school facilities necessary to support state-funded all-day kindergarten and class size reduction in kindergarten through third grade." [2015 3rd sp.s. c 41 § 101.]

Effective date—2015 3rd sp.s. c 41: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [July 14, 2015]." [2015 3rd sp.s. c 41 § 403.]