

Section 1. Quality schools funding task force Special Interim committee on school funding. (1) There is a quality schools funding task force special interim committee on school funding. The task force special interim committee shall continue the work of the joint select committee on education funding established during the 59th legislative session. By July 1, 2007, the task force special interim committee shall:

(a) determine the total costs of a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools, as defined by the legislature;

(b) determine the state's share of the total costs of a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools; and

(c) construct a funding formula that:

(i) is based on the cost studies completed by the task force;

(ii) includes a mechanism for inflationary adjustments; and

(iii) equitably distributes the identified state's share of the cost of the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools based on the educationally relevant factors established by the legislature.

(2) The members of the task force special interim committee are:

(a) four members of the house of representatives, two from each party, two appointed by the speaker of the house, one by the house democrat house leader and two appointed by the republican house leader;

(b) four members of the senate, two from each party, two appointed by the president of the senate and two appointed by the minority leader of the senate; and

(c) ad ex officio nonvoting members:
(i) the presiding officer of the board of public education or the presiding officer's designee;

(ii) the superintendent of public instruction or the superintendent's designee;

(iii) the director of the department of revenue or the director's designee; and

(iv) the lieutenant governor or the lieutenant governor's designee.

(3) The ~~task force~~ special interim committee shall select its presiding officer from among the voting members at the first meeting of the task force.

(4) The ~~task force~~ special interim committee shall determine the costs of providing the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools, as defined by the legislature, through:

(a) studies authorized and conducted by the ~~task force~~ special interim committee, or

(b) the adoption of analyses of educational needs and costs contained in existing studies completed by reputable and reliable experts.

(5) In implementing the cost analyses and in drafting a new funding formula, the task force shall:

(a) work closely with and accept input from representatives from the board of public education, the office of public instruction, private organizations, and members of the public; and

(b) examine the state's existing and projected financial resources as well as the needs and concerns of Montana taxpayers.

(6) (5) The ~~task force~~ special interim committee is attached for administrative purposes to the legislative services division.

(7) (6) On or before ~~August 15~~ February 1, 2006, the ~~task force~~ special interim committee shall present its recommendations for a funding formula designed to meet the specifications outlined in subsection (1)(c) to the education and local government interim committee in the form of legislation that conforms to the bill drafting requirements of the legislative services division. The ~~task force~~ special interim committee may independently request the drafting of legislation or may request legislation jointly with the education and local government interim committee."