

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Recommendation: Formula for determining the Full-Time Equivalency of a student enrolled in a public school unit

SL2021-180, Section 7.17 (a)

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A. Introduction

In the recent 2021-2022 biennial budget bill¹ the General Assembly directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish a Student Full Time Equivalency (FTE) formula.

SL2021-180, in Section 7.17 (a) the State Board of Education shall establish a formula for determining the full-time equivalency of a student enrolled in a public school unit of the State for the purposes of providing State funds on a per pupil basis. The formula shall include the amount of instructional time required for the school day for a full-time student.

North Carolina K-12 schools are currently accounted for based on “average daily membership” (ADM) which is the number of students in membership by grade by school for a defined period of time, generally 20 instructional days. A student is in membership if they are scheduled for at least half the instructional day. A student scheduled for less than one half of the instructional day is not included in membership

Average Daily Membership

The sum of the number of days in membership for all non-violating students in the school month.

divided by

the number of days in the school month.

A full detail of the calculation of average daily membership is provided in Chapter 2 of the State Board of Education policy Student Attendance and Student Accounting Manual (SASA).²

Local education agencies are initially funded based on the higher of the prior year actual ADM and the projected current year ADM. The funding is adjusted per legislation and State Board of Education policy.

In addition to the formula, SL2021-180 Section 7.17 (b) requires a new annual report that disaggregates the new student FTE by public school unit, grade, and course:

(b), the Department of Public Instruction shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education, the House Appropriations Committee on Education, and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly on the number of students and the full-time equivalency of those students by public school unit and grade level from the prior school year.

The data in the report shall be disaggregated by enrollment in courses offered by the public school units and those offered through other dual enrollment and joint programs, including North Carolina Virtual Public School, institutions of higher education, and nonpublic schools."

This report is due January 15, 2023, for reporting on fiscal year 2021-22, and is due October 15 of each year thereafter. The requirement in subsection (b) is not included in this report.

B. Resources

The formula was developed by a working group comprised of subject matter experts in K-12 instruction, special populations, school business and student information systems. The community college personnel

¹ [SL 2021-180 \(SB 105\) \(ncleg.gov\)](#)

² [School Attendance & Student Accounting Manual](#)

were consulted for their current practices, and the preliminary recommendation was presented to the local superintendents prior to approval by the State Board of Education.

C. The Formula Development

The following items were determined:

1. A denominator which defines the amount of instructional time for the school day that is considered full time for a full-time student
2. A numerator based on instructional time
3. The point in time the FTE is calculated

1. DENOMINATOR = 300 MINUTES

General Statute 115C-84.2 requires all public school units (PSUs) have a minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours of instruction. Based on this legislation, the hours of instruction is:

1,025 instructional hours divided by the 185 days = 5.5 hours.

Recognizing the differences in scheduling between schools and PSUs the recommended full time instructional hours is 5. PSUs schedule the students instructional time in minutes and therefore, the denominator of 5 hours is converted to 300 minutes.

2. NUMERATOR = TOTAL SCHEDULED INSTRUCTIONAL TIME BY STUDENT

The numerator is the scheduled instructional minutes of the student. The instructional minutes are defined by allowable instructional course codes.

This does not include minutes that the student is required to be supervised such as during bus transportation, school activities after school such as athletics or band, times between classes or lunch. The instructional minutes include recess for grades K-5 consistent with G.S.115C-307(b).

3. THE POINT IN TIME

Although technically the FTE could be calculated at any point in time, at the beginning of the year the schedules are being finalized and the data is not stable. Unlike ADM that is calculated for the same point within the school year, regardless of the school calendar, it is not practical for an FTE calculation

The FTE is both stable and consistent with other headcount dates on October 1 and April 1 of the school year.

STUDENT FTE FORMULA

FTE = Scheduled Instructional Minutes by Student divided by 300 minutes

1 FTE = 300 minutes No student may exceed the 1.0 FTE

Example:

student minutes = $320/300 = 1$ FTE

student minutes = $285/300 = 0.95$ FTE

D. Other Items

AUTHORITATIVE DATA SOURCE - STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS)

The Student Information System (SIS) is required per the Uniform Education Reporting System (GS 115C-12 (18)) for all PSUs. The SIS captures all student schedules, attendance, courses and other key data elements by school, grade, and PSU. It is currently on a PowerSchool platform. The SIS can provide the scheduled instructional minutes required for the formula. Data is entered by school student data managers, approved by principals, and submitted to NCDPI. The quality of the data and consistency relies upon the input from the PSUs and the over 2,664 schools.

There are limitations to the SIS. Variances are to be expected due to the unique and varied needs of students and schools. Course codes and related attributes need to be reviewed and potentially further defined or consolidated. The application of course codes is reliant on individuals which allows for human interpretations and normal errors and tendencies which inherently create inconsistencies in the data.

The SIS is designed on a single school district architecture, which does not allow for easily collected state level aggregate information. The systems limitations inhibit DPI's ability to quickly see state level data. This can delay the ready availability of data required for this formula and its potential application.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Public school service delivery for K-12 students vary due to the unique needs of each student. Following is additional information specific to special populations.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (CWD)

Services are itemized by the individual education program (IEP) for each student. These are not associated with a course code or name in the SIS. These needs are often layered on top of schedules visible in the SIS. These could be specifically designed instruction in both academic and functional needs and related services (i.e., Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech, etc.). These services are provided by CWD teachers, therapists, and other specialty providers and could be on-site or off-site

OTHER CATEGORICAL SUPPORTS

Similar to supplemental services for CWD, there are categorial supports for students with limited English proficiency (LEP), academically gifted (AIG), students below grade level, etc. Often these services are similarly scheduled as CWD and not directly aligned to a course code in the SIS. The services may be pull-out instruction, supplemental or in an inclusive setting within the primary classroom setting.

SERVICE DELIVERY AND SUPERVISION

Unlike the university and community college setting our K-12 PSUs are responsible for not only the instruction of their students but the supervision, health and well being of their students from the time the bus picks them up to the point the bus drops them home at the end of the day. A full school day for K-12 staff may be from 6am when the bus drivers report to after 7pm when athletics and afterschool programming is provided. As stated, instructional time also does not include the time for lunch, classroom changes, recess, etc. which also require PSU supervision and supports.