



K-12
EDUCATION

STAFFING RESEARCH

Kenai Peninsula Borough School
District

December 2016

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

In support of KPBSD's efforts to adjust staffing levels to meet student needs amidst difficult fiscal realities, Hanover Research has conducted two research projects focused on district staffing practices internally and externally.

Benchmarking Staffing Formulas and Policies

The first project focused on determining and benchmarking staffing policies and practices in districts with similar challenges to KPBSD in terms of geography and diversity of school size and type. To do so, we surveyed and conducted interviews with such districts in both Alaska and the Lower 48 states.

District Staffing Survey

Secondly, we conducted a district-wide survey of staff, parents, students, and community members regarding perceptions of staffing within their schools and the district, staffing needs, prioritization of positions, and suggestions for dealing with fiscal challenges.



BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Methodology

Determining participants

To facilitate a relevant sample, Hanover Research developed a contact list of 77 districts in Alaska and the rest of the country based on a series of characteristics. First, districts were large geographically. While districts in the Lower 48 are not as large as Alaska's largest districts, we contacted qualifying districts primarily in the Western United States that are spread over a large geographical area. Secondly, districts had significant diversity of school size, with some small schools and some larger schools. We reached out to multiple relevant contacts within each of these districts such as business officers, human resource directors, and in some cases superintendents.

Data Collection

All contacts received a survey to complete regarding their district's staffing practices, and numerous contacts provided additional information and participated in a follow-up interview with Hanover Research about their responses. The process collected 14 survey responses from consenting districts.



BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Findings

Key Findings

Surveyed districts emphasize the importance of staffing and funding flexibility to meet student and programmatic needs across diverse schools. Contacts emphasized the importance of staffing and funding schools according to demonstrated student and programmatic needs. In these districts, staffing ratios provide an equitable basis from which to make additional adjustments, rather than inflexible staffing requirements to which schools must adhere.

As shown through the district's staffing survey, analyzing satisfaction with and perceptions of staffing across school sites provides valuable insight.

In general, Alaskan districts have some unique challenges that require greater adjustment to staffing ratios by school size. Eight of the 14 of surveyed districts have staffing formulas or ratios based on grade level, all of which increase student-teacher ratios for higher grade levels. Both Lower Kuskokwim SD and North Slope Borough SD vary their staffing formula or ratio according to student enrollment tiers. Similar to Kenai, both districts allocate proportionally more staff to smaller schools. Other surveyed districts note that they make exceptions or considerations for small and/or remote schools on an ad-hoc basis.

BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Findings

Key Findings

Both Lower Kuskokwim SD and North Slope Borough SD report having modified their staffing formulas or ratios to eliminate sharp changes in staffing and funding when schools move between enrollment tiers.

For Lower Kuskokwim SD, this involved assigning a minimum number of teachers to individual enrollment tiers to prevent the student-teacher ratio from falling as schools move into higher enrollment tiers. North Slope Borough SD, which bases its formula on the Alaska Department of Education's district funding formula, similarly modified the state's calculation of adjusted average daily membership to prevent schools with 101 to 425 students from receiving a disproportionate amount of staff and resources.

The majority of surveyed districts make a variety of exceptions or special considerations for small and/or remote schools, including allowing for lower student-staff ratios and providing schools with extra resources.

Six of the surveyed districts allowed low-enrollment schools to have lower student-staff ratios at either the class or school level. Districts also allow for multi-grade classes if enrollment reaches a certain low threshold. Similar to Kenai, the two profiled Alaska districts' staffing formulas allocate proportionally more staff to smaller schools. However, while Kenai has separate sets of staffing ratios for two tiers of schools (e.g., schools with more or less than 200 students), North Slope Borough SD and Lower Kuskokwim SD have more granular enrollment tiers that alter student-staff ratios at smaller intervals.

BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Findings

Key Findings

In comparison with the surveyed districts, Kenai has specific staffing ratios for more positions than any of the other districts. After classroom teachers, surveyed districts were most likely to have staffing ratios for special education teachers and counselors. A small number of districts set formulas or ratios for secretaries, technology specialists, administrators, and custodians, but none indicated formulas or ratios for librarians, athletic directors, reading specialists, or intervention specialists. In cases where both Kenai and one or more of the surveyed districts reported staffing ratios, Kenai's student-staff ratios were most often lower.

In comparison with many similar districts in the Lower 48, KPBSD maintains slightly higher ratios for specific positions like classroom teachers. For example, on the following slide we note that KPBSD's stated staffing ratios are slightly above the small group averages, with slightly lower gaps in lower grades and larger ones in upper grades.



BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Findings

Reported Ratios for Classroom Teachers by Grade Level

DISTRICT	K	GRADES 1-5	GRADES 6-8	GRADES 9-12
Carlsbad Municipal Schools (NM)	18:1	24:1 (Grades 1-2) 26:1 (Grades 3-5)	N/A	N/A
Deming Public Schools (NM)	20:1	24:1	24:1 (Grade 6) 30:1 (Grades 7-8)	30:1
Iron County SD (UT)	N/A	N/A	26.5:1	27.5:1
Kern Union HSD (CA)	N/A	N/A	N/A	32:1
Kingman USD (AZ)	27:1	27:1 (Grades 1-2) 30:1 (Grades 3-5)	N/A	342:1
Plumas USD (CA)	22:1	22:1 (Grades 1-2) 25:1 (Grades 3-5)	25:1 (Grade 6) 32:1 (Grades 7-9)	32:1
Roswell ISD (NM)	20:1	22:1 (Grades 1-3) 24:1 (Grades 4-5)	24:1 (Grade 6) 160:1 (Grades 7-8)	160:1
			135:1 and 27:1 (English, Grades 7-8)	150:1 and 30:1 (English)
Uintah SD (UT)	24:1	24:1 (Grades 1-2) 25:1 (Grades 3-4) 26:1 (Grades 5)	27:1 (Grades 6-7) 28:1 (Grade 8)	28:1 (Grade 9) 29:1 (Grades 10-12)
Average	21.8:1	24.9:1	27.1:1	29.8:1
Kenai Peninsula BSD (AK)**	20.5:1 [17.5:1]	22.5:1 (Grades 1-3) 24.5:1 (Grades 4-5) [17.5:1]	24.5:1 (Grade 6) 25:1 (Grade 7-8) [17.5:1 (Grade 6)]	25:1

Note: Responses modified for clarity



BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Relevant Examples – North Slope

Practices for Adjusting ADM for Equity

North Slope Adjusted ADM Formulas Based on School Size

SCHOOL SIZE	FORMULA
10-74.99	122.85
75-149.99	$122.85 + (1.27 * (ADM - 75))$
150-249.99	$218.10 + (1.08 * (ADM - 150))$
250-399.99	$326.10 + (.97 * (ADM - 250))$
400-749.99	$471.60 + (.92 * (ADM - 400))$
Over 750	$471.60 + (.92 * (ADM - 400)) * 2$

North Slope's district-adjusted ADM ratios helps to ensure an equitable distribution of both staff and funding across diverse schools. Specifically, the district's enrollment-based formula does the following to promote staffing equity:

- **ADM adjustments for small and large schools:** The changes made to the Alaska DOE adjusted ADM formula promote equity by weighting schools on either end of the enrollment distribution more heavily, according to their need.
- **Smooth transitions for schools with fluctuating enrollments:** By not counting schools with an ADM of 101-425 students as two schools (e.g., based on K-12 enrollment), North Slope eliminated the potential for large staffing and funding jumps for schools entering this enrollment band.
- **Annual recalculations of district-adjusted ADM:** The district plans to calculate adjusted ADM for each school on an annual basis to accommodate annual enrollment fluctuations and adjust staffing allocations accordingly. Within individual school years, enrollment fluctuations will not affect staffing as North Slope cannot move teachers between schools during the year.

BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Relevant Examples – Lower Kuskokwim

Practices for Adjusting ADM for Equity

Regular Instruction Teacher Staffing Ratios Based on Enrollment

TIERS	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP (ADM)	RATIO
Tier 1	10-49	10.2:1
Tier 2	50-100	15.2:1 with a minimum of 4.8 teachers
Tier 3	101-200	17.2:1 with a minimum of 6.57 teachers
Tier 4	201-300	18.2:1 with a minimum of 11.62 teachers
Tier 5	301+	19.2:1 with a minimum of 16.48 teachers

LKSD staffs regular instruction teachers, special education teachers, deans of students, administrative secretaries and site technology specialists according to average daily membership (ADM) tiers. ADM tiers correspond with a staffing ratio or stipulation and are based on programming needs. Both ADM tiers and staffing ratios and stipulations vary depending on the specific position. For example, there are five tiers for staffing regular instruction teachers, four tiers for deans of students, and six tiers for administrative secretary. This differs from Kenai’s practice of making adjustments only for schools with enrollment less than 200 students.

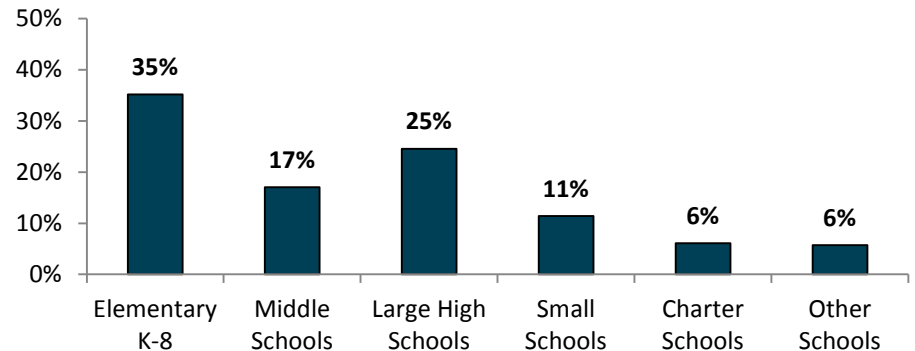
The district also allocates discretionary funds that allow individual schools to increase staffing based on need.

DISTRICT STAFFING SURVEY

Methodology

Populations surveyed

- 1,598 respondents from 45 schools in KPBSD
 - 562 school staff
 - 833 parents
 - 131 students
 - 31 District Office Staff
 - 39 community members



Data collection

- Survey developed in August 2016 in consultation with KPBSD district staff
- Survey link was distributed via email, social media, and other communications channels throughout the month of September
- Periodic reminders sent to staff and parents throughout the month to offer opportunities for participation
- Some schools provided time for students to participate



DISTRICT STAFFING SURVEY

Findings

Key Findings

More than half of respondents are generally satisfied with the current student-staff ratio (58%).

Majorities of responding school staff (56%), parents (57%), students (70%), district office staff (62%), compared to slightly fewer community members (49%), indicate some level of satisfaction (extremely/very/somewhat satisfied) with the current student-staff ratio at KPBSD.

However, a sizable amount of respondents (56%) report that the district is understaffed. While 41 percent of all respondents state that the current student-staff ratio is reasonable, a larger percentage of respondents (47%-60%) – except for responding students (27%) – believe that the district is understaffed. Further, respondents affiliated with regular public schools are more likely to report staffing shortage and to *disagree* that their school has sufficient school staff in proportion to the number of students it serves, compared to those from charter schools or other alternative schools.

DISTRICT STAFFING SURVEY

Findings

Key Findings

Responding stakeholders prioritize keeping or adding classroom teachers, Special Education teachers, and interventionists.

- Overall, math (63%), English language arts (53%), science (46%), and arts (44%) are the highest demanded subject areas for additional classroom teachers. However, preferences vary across respondent groups.
- Respondents also frequently mention that their school would benefit from more staff to support high-needs students, such as having a full-time interventionist on site, or additional Special Education aides.

Figure ES.2: Most Requested Classroom Teacher Positions by Respondent Group

RANK	SCHOOL STAFF (N=275)	PARENT/ GUARDIAN (N=357)	STUDENT (N=19)	DISTRICT OFFICE STAFF (N=13)	COMMUNITY MEMBER (N=19)
1	Math	Math	Arts	Math, CTE	Arts
2	ELA	Arts	Social Studies	ELA	Math
3	Science	Science	Math, English Language Arts	Science, Arts, Technology Skills	ELA, Technology Skills, CTE

DISTRICT STAFFING SURVEY

Findings

Key Findings

Anticipating budget reductions, respondents are supportive of staffing or schedule adjustment at the school level. However, there is a consensus that cutting teacher positions would be the district's last resort. Respondents emphasize that staffing adjustment should accommodate programmatic priorities and student needs at individual schools.

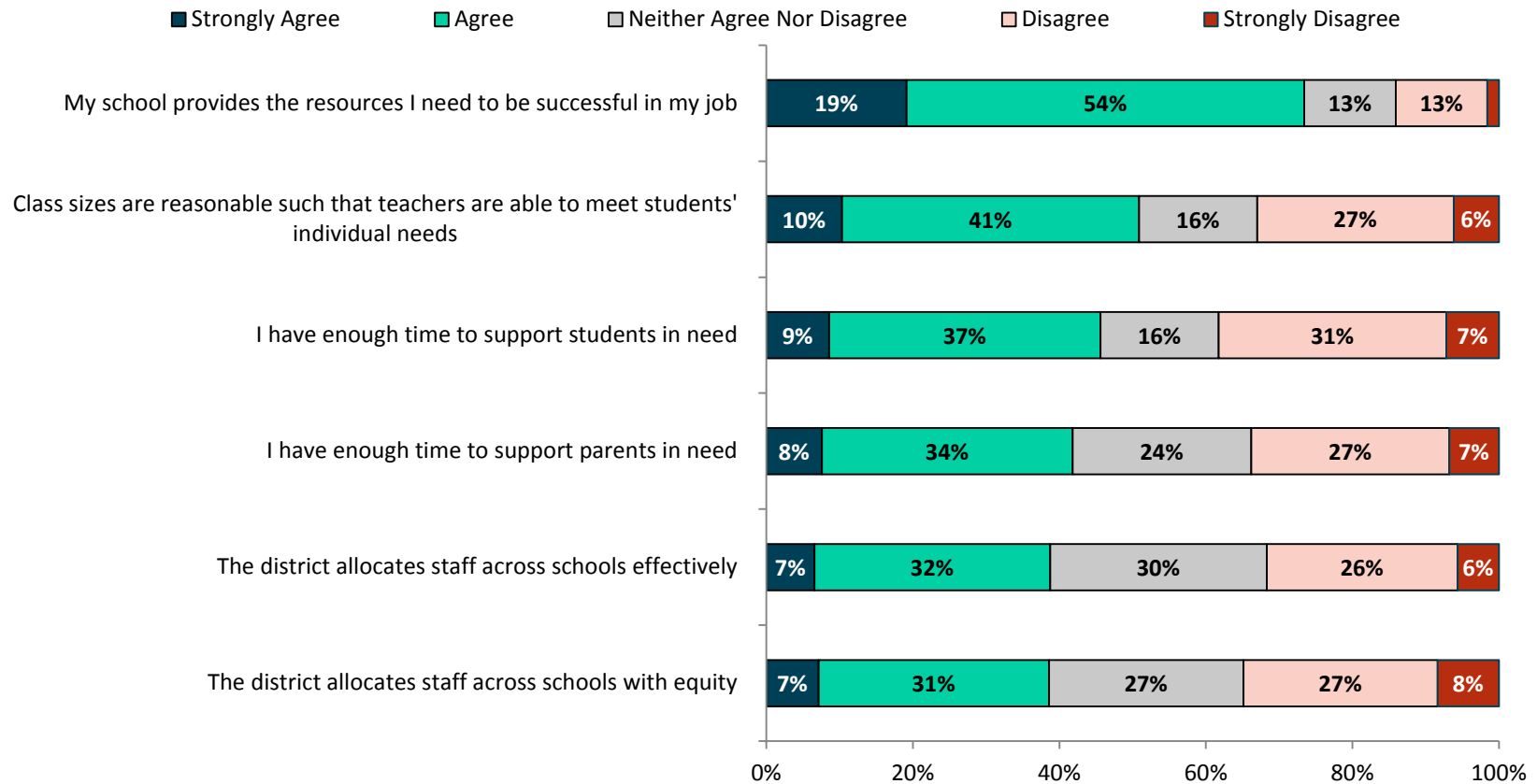
Respondents most commonly recommend reductions in school supplies, and administrative/operational cost. Specifically, a number of respondents advocate replacing paper-based textbooks and materials with digital or online resources, reusing textbooks, and reducing the amount of software/testing updates.

Stakeholders are generally supportive of key KPBSD initiatives including the JumpStart program, Career and Technical Education, and Distance and Blended Learning. Respondents note that JumpStart is an effective use of borough funds and lessens the financial burden of attending college and that CTE programs are of good quality and integral to the district. Stakeholders are slightly more positive regarding Distance Learning than Blended Learning, with many noting that there is not sufficient technical support.

SELECTED FIGURES

Staffing and Work Conditions

Level of Agreement: Staffing and Work Conditions



SELECTED FIGURES

Staffing and Work Conditions

Satisfaction with Staffing Levels for Different Positions in KPBSD - Staff

POSITION	% DISSATISFIED WITH STAFFING LEVEL	UNDER-STAFFED	STAFFING GUIDELINES DON'T REFLECT SCHOOL NEEDS	LACK OF AVAILABILITY	STRETCHED THINLY ACROSS SCHOOLS	UNDER-QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES
Counselor or Counseling assistant	22%	43%	16%	20%	33%	5%
Interventionist	20%	62%	12%	10%	8%	6%
Special Education classroom teacher	16%	58%	9%	8%	9%	20%
Classroom teacher	16%	60%	27%	4%	6%	5%
Special Education resource teacher	15%	63%	13%	9%	7%	16%
Library aide	14%	65%	12%	12%	4%	7%
Read 180 teacher	13%	34%	9%	17%	2%	2%
Elementary specialist	12%	47%	10%	13%	14%	1%
Program staff	11%	30%	16%	16%	13%	0%
Custodian	10%	47%	8%	13%	5%	15%
School administrator	9%	35%	22%	15%	9%	10%
Nurse	8%	16%	4%	22%	34%	4%
Food service	7%	27%	11%	8%	8%	6%
Secretary	5%	62%	19%	2%	2%	9%
Bookkeeper	2%	20%	17%	6%	0%	0%



SELECTED FIGURES

Open-Ended Comments – Additional Detail on Staffing Levels

THEME	COUNT	SAMPLE COMMENTS
Large class size	39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Last year my son had 30 kids in his tenth grade English class and this year he has 30 kids in his geometry class. He said he has about 25 kids in most of his classes but some such as Spanish are smaller.” “In my experience, KPBSD has the above ratios, but they are not always followed. It is frustrating to be told the district ratio is 22.5 to 1 and have 25-28 kids are placed in your class.”
Student-staff ratio is reasonable	21%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As an alternative school, we tend to need smaller class sizes to work with the students that we serve. Our staff is allocated correctly for the fluctuating population we encounter during the year.” “Student teacher ratio is 24:1, with younger grades having a teacher's aide. They utilize parent volunteers. Parents can sign up to help with reading and math during school.”
Specific request	21%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Could use another full time interventionist, full time librarian, full-time Quest teacher. Every elementary school could use a full time art teacher instead of an art kit.” “We need to keep 4 special education teachers at this school and hire specialists to support students with more intensive needs that require specialized instruction.”
Overworked staff	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The elementary staff is asked to teach three grade levels at the same time. This doesn't give the students the teacher's time to do a lot of one on one that they need.” “it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of our students when there are 25+ kids stuffed into one tiny classroom with only one teacher to try and deal with not only academic needs, but social needs, mental health needs, and physical needs.”
Students with special needs are under-served	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We struggle at our school to have a staff member available to supervise distance ed students. As a district, we push and encourage students to take distance ed classes without providing resources in the building (a staff member) to supervise those students.” “We have a lot of high needs students that require individualized instruction. Our aide coverage is not enough to offer the support that our IEPs have outlined and our teams have determined would allow for our students to receive adequate support to be in a Least Restrictive Environment.”
Overstaffed	1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I think government as a whole should take a real hard look at staff and see what we could do without. There is always waste to be trimmed up.”
Other feedback	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We are a small school and when budget cuts hit, teachers are cut and there are less variety of classes. Kids are pushed into Distance Learning courses in which most are done at home.” “I feel that the elementary staff would benefit from professional development targeted at multi-level teaching.”

SELECTED FIGURES

Open-Ended Comments

Respondents note that KPBSD can increase...

THEME	COUNT	SAMPLE COMMENTS
Staffing adjustment	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Invest in teachers and people who make relationships with kids before spending money on more technology and equipment.” “Have bigger classes with Teacher’s aid to help out instead of adding another teacher. One aid per class grade would be sufficient and would allow the school to hire at a lower pay rate than a teacher, but still have enough help for the students. ”
Online resource/technology	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “More distance education to remote sites to reduce staffing and transportation costs...” “More distance conferencing for itinerate employees (e.g. distance speech therapy, telephonic or video conference for IEPs) to reduce travel expenses.”
Curricular areas/programs	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Use program budgeting that requires each school to justify the effectiveness of each program funded...Funds need to be spent to help students that are struggling before spending money on athletics and extra-curricular.”
Funding	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Perhaps the district or individual school could focus more on seeking funding elsewhere. Requesting parent, student, and community help in raising funds would likely help.”
Consolidation/sharing	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It seems that in the Homer area specifically, there are a lot of empty classrooms across all the schools. Fireweed is split between 2 buildings, even though the entire school community desires both ‘big’ and ‘little’ Fireweed to be in one location. Some sort of consolidation to make better use of physical resources would save some money on facilities costs.”
Volunteer/community support	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Find ways of engaging families as volunteers and active partners in their children’s education (e.g., specifically asking parents to share in the class or take leadership roles to show that parents are valued).”
Homeschooling/ alternative options	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Encourage more homeschooling.” “Review and use more community/college/technical programs to supplant in school curriculum teaching.”

SELECTED FIGURES

Open-Ended Comments

Respondents note that KPBSD can decrease...

THEME	COUNT	SAMPLE COMMENTS
Supplies	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Take a detailed look at waste in school programs. I.e. Cafeteria food. School supplies. Emphasis on digital supplies vs traditional paper. Books etc.”▪ “There is a lot of wasted money with curriculum materials. Instead of having a 1:1 ratio of a 10-pound textbook, just buy a classroom set and have an online subscription. Money could also be saved by not updating software every single year...”
Administration/operation	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Reduce administrative positions at the school district office and provide those funds to hire more teachers.”
Curricular areas/programs	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Hold on new projects or high expenditures until funds are available. Quit cutting art classes! Drama, music and other visual arts.”
School day (i.e., four-day school week)	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Try four-day school weeks. Many districts across the country have tried this with great results. Better student and staff attendance and increase in test scores.”
Staffing	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Stop paying for frivolous job positions in the district like a PBIS coordinator.”
Other feedback	16%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Take the money you have and allow each school to allocate where funds go. You have charter schools with aides and brand new equipment. In other public schools, you have 30-year-old spaces and no aides. Let all public schools determine how their money will be spent.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE RESEARCH

Responsiveness to individual school needs

When faced with great diversity across schools, districts adapt staffing policies to meet the specific needs of the district and of individual schools. Using the school-level survey results – together with class-size reports, stakeholder consultation, and direction from school leadership – KPBSD should determine needs and priorities across all schools and adjust staffing policies with discretion, making exceptions where necessary to preserve programming and acceptable class size.

In general, KPBSD's current staffing ratios are just slightly higher than those in comparable surveyed districts, though variability across schools is likely to be higher as well.

Other Alaskan districts have adopted a wider range of enrollment bands to differentiate student to teacher ratios. For example, Lower Kuskokwim SD maintains three enrollment bands based on ADM under 200, whereas KPBSD currently has just one.



HANOVER RESEARCH

Conor Kelly

Content Director, K12

(P) 202-350-4753

(E) ckelly@hanoverresearch.com

