

# OUTLINE: BENCHMARKING STAFFING FORMULAS AND POLICIES

Prepared for Kenai Peninsula Borough School District  
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This document outlines a proposed research project on staffing formulas and policies at school districts in the United States similar in size and geography to Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

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# PROJECT OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION

In this document, Hanover Research outlines a proposed benchmarking project to support Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) in evaluating staffing formulas in anticipation of reduced funding from the State of Alaska. The ultimate goal of this project is to identify strategies for ensuring an equitable distribution of staff and services across all schools in the district. The project will address the following main research questions:

- What are the staffing ratios and formulas used by peer school districts in Alaska and across the United States?
- How do peer school districts maintain educational quality and equity across diverse schools of various sizes?

In the following pages, we describe the methodology for a benchmarking project designed to gather data about staffing formulas and related information from districts similar to KPBSD. This outline includes two main sections:

- **Peer Identification** – The first section summarizes Hanover’s proposed list of peer school districts to be included in the benchmarking analysis.
- **Benchmarking** – The second section provides a brief overview of Hanover’s proposed benchmarking research methodology. The benchmarking will include both in-depth interviews and structured information collection from peer districts, including a review of budget and student achievement data.

Hanover will prepare a formal report with the findings of the benchmarking study as well as a PowerPoint file, which will be presented to the district administration and school board. Hanover welcomes feedback from KPBSD on this outline, and will adjust the proposed approach to best meet the district’s needs.

## PEER IDENTIFICATION

Hanover has identified a preliminary set of peer school districts for this benchmarking project. This section reviews our methodology for identifying peers as well as summary information about the proposed peers.

To begin, Hanover identified the 50 largest school districts in the United States by total square miles.<sup>1</sup> Geographic information was then supplemented by other school district characteristics, such as number of schools, total enrollment, and setting.<sup>2</sup> In order to narrow the list of peer school districts, Hanover removed 11 school districts with five or fewer total

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<sup>1</sup> “2013-2014 School Districts – Geographic Characteristics & Mapping Applications.” ProximityOne. [http://proximityone.com/schooldistricts\\_2013-14.htm](http://proximityone.com/schooldistricts_2013-14.htm)

<sup>2</sup> “Search for Public School Districts.” National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>

schools. Additionally, one large school district with over 300,000 students was also removed from the initial list.

Hanover will target the remaining 37 school districts for benchmarking, as well as additional districts if needed or warranted. It is important to have a relatively large number of peer school districts to begin with in order to account for districts that may choose not to participate in the benchmarking project, especially given administration over the summer. If needed, additional districts may be included in order to increase participation. Figure 1.1 provides a summary of the peer school districts. A complete list can be viewed in the appendix.

**Figure 1.1: Peer School District Characteristics**

	KPBSD	MEDIAN	MIN	MAX
<b>Geographic Size (sq. mi.)</b>	16,079	17,109	4,797	88,699
<b>Total Enrollment</b>	8,960	6,136	211	65,550
<b>Number of Schools</b>	43	19	6	115
<b>Smallest School by Enrollment</b>	3	39	2	338
<b>Largest School by Enrollment</b>	406	732	69	2,297

## BENCHMARKING

### METHODOLOGY

Appropriate individuals at each district will be contacted via e-mail to request participation in the benchmarking. Depending on the district’s size and organization, Hanover will contact a district-level administrator responsible for the budget such as the Chief Finance Officer, Budget Director, or District Accountant. In some smaller districts, the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent appears to serve this function.

Hanover will utilize two methodologies in order to gather information from peer school districts. First, Hanover will distribute a brief survey with core questions related to staffing formulas and policies. As a follow-up, Hanover will request an in-depth interview with any districts that complete the survey or indicate willingness to participate. The in-depth interview will allow for more detailed and nuanced questions as well as the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on answers provided in the survey.

Upon completion of the survey and in-depth interviews, Hanover will analyze the results and compile a formal report. The report will also draw on any relevant information that is publically available or provided by the district, such as student achievement results or budget documents. The report will include both a high-level overview of findings and trends as well as several in-depth profiles of district practices.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

The initial survey will be distributed via e-mail and districts can complete and e-mail responses back to a Hanover analyst, who can also assist with any questions or concerns about the survey questions. A draft survey instrument is listed below. If KPBSD can provide descriptions for various positions (e.g., program staff or AD), Hanover can provide documentation for participants.

### GREETING

*Thank you for choosing to participate in this benchmarking survey! If you have any questions about how to complete the survey please contact [Hanover Analyst].*

*Save this file and e-mail your completed survey to [Hanover e-mail address]. Please attach any relevant files and documentation as well.*

*In thanks for your participation Hanover will provide you with a summary of the overall results.*

### SECTION I: STAFFING FORMULAS

*We are interested in learning more about formulas or ratios (e.g., 1:25 student/teacher ratio, 1.0 FTE Librarian per school) that your district uses for staffing schools.*

**1. Does your district have separate staffing formulas or ratios for schools based on the following characteristics? Place an "X" next to your selection. Select all that apply.**

*Note: If you have this information compiled in another format please feel free to send us those files instead of completing this question.*

- No, district only has one set of staffing formulas or ratios
- Grade level (please list groups used in the space below)
- School Size (please list groups used in the space below)
- Other characteristics (please describe in the space below)

**2. Does your district have set staffing formulas or ratios for the following positions? If so, please provide details on the formulas or ratios used for each position in the right column of the table. Place an "X" next to your selection.**

*Note: If you have this information compiled in another format please feel free to send us those files instead of completing the table below.*

POSITION	No	Yes	STAFFING FORMULA OR RATIO INFORMATION (E.G., KINDERGARTEN 1:20, GRADE 1-5 1:23, ETC...)
Certified Classroom Teachers	[ ]	[ ]	
Certified Specialists	[ ]	[ ]	
Certified Interventionists	[ ]	[ ]	
Special Education Resource Teachers	[ ]	[ ]	
Special Education Self-Contained Classroom Teachers	[ ]	[ ]	
Counselors	[ ]	[ ]	
Assistant Counselors	[ ]	[ ]	
Librarians	[ ]	[ ]	
Read 180 Teachers	[ ]	[ ]	
Program Staff	[ ]	[ ]	
AD	[ ]	[ ]	
Custodians	[ ]	[ ]	
Library Aides	[ ]	[ ]	
Secretaries	[ ]	[ ]	
Bookkeepers	[ ]	[ ]	

**3. Are there any other positions not listed in the table above that your district has staffing formulas or ratios for? If so, please use the table below to describe.**

*Note: If you have this information compiled in another format please feel free to send us those files instead of completing the table below.*

POSITION	STAFFING FORMULA OR RATIO INFORMATION (E.G., KINDERGARTEN 1:20, GRADE 1-5 1:23, ETC...)
Enter Position(s) Here...	

**4. Does your district make any special considerations or exceptions for especially small or remote schools in your district? If so, please describe in the space below.**

*SECTION II: EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES*

*We would like your opinion on your district’s current policies related to staffing ratios. Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be attributed directly to you or your district in the summary results provided to participating districts.*

**5. Do you believe that the staffing formulas and ratios at your district are effective in ensuring an equitable distribution of resources across all schools? Place an “X” next to your selection.**

No (please explain further in the space below)

Yes (please explain further in the space below)

**6. Has your district made any adjustments or changes to staffing formulas or ratios in order to mitigate reduced funding or budget shortfalls? If so, please describe in the space below.**

*SECTION III: FOLLOW-UP*

**7. Would you or another representative of your district be willing to discuss your responses to this survey with an analyst from Hanover Research? Place an “X” next to your selection.**

No

Yes (please list preferences below)

**Which would you prefer?**

Conversation via phone

E-mail correspondence

No preference

**Please list your preferred contact information:**

Name:

Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

*Thank you for your participation! Please save this file and e-mail your completed survey to [Hanover e-mail address]. Attach any relevant files and documentation as well.*

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Contacts that complete the survey and/or express interest in discussing staffing formulas and policies further will be asked to participate in an additional in-depth interview with a Hanover Research analyst. Hanover will also offer contacts the option of completing both the survey and follow-up interview via phone at once if that is preferred.

The interviews will be conversational in tone, but will cover a set of specific themes and questions. Additional questions may be asked in order to clarify responses provided on the survey. The table below provides a list of questions that will guide the in-depth interviews.



**Figure 1.2: Interview Guiding Questions**

THEME	QUESTIONS
<p><b>Staffing Formulas and Ratios</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Any follow-up questions based on responses provided on survey</li> <li>▪ Are there any additional details on staffing formulas or ratios that you did not include in your survey responses?</li> <li>▪ Can you send any documentation that lists policies related to staffing formulas or ratios? [if not already provided]</li> <li>▪ Can you provide any information on how staffing formulas are set in your district?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How long have these formulas been in place at your district?</li> <li>○ Who has oversight over determining the formulas?</li> <li>○ Does the district periodically review and adjust the formulas?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Can you provide any additional details on how special education staff and services are distributed across the district?</li> <li>▪ Does your district have any policies or formulas related to providing extracurricular activities to students (e.g., Band, Sports)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equitable Distribution of Staff Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Follow-up about any responses given to survey questions or ask questions if it was not answered on the survey:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you believe that the staffing formulas and ratios at your district are effective in ensuring an equitable distribution of resources across all schools?</li> <li>○ Has your district made any adjustments or changes to staffing formulas or ratios in order to mitigate reduced funding or budget shortfalls?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Based on your district’s experiences, do you have any recommendations for other districts about how to ensure equity in the distribution of staff across the district?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staffing at Diverse School Sizes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does your district manage setting staffing formulas and ratios at both large and small schools in your district?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there different formulas based on the size of the school and the range of grade levels served?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Does your district have any small and remote schools that serve students across many grade levels (e.g., A K-12 school with fewer than 30 total students)? If so:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there any special considerations or exceptions made for staffing in these schools?</li> <li>○ Are there any special considerations or exceptions made for providing specific services (e.g., Special Education) to students in these schools?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# APPENDIX

**Figure A.1: Preliminary Peer Districts for Benchmarking**

SCHOOL DISTRICT (SD)	STATE	GEOGRAPHICAL SIZE (SQ. MI.)	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOL	SMALLEST SCHOOL SIZE	LARGEST SCHOOL SIZE	SETTING
<b>Kenai Peninsula Borough SD</b>	AK	16,079	8,960	43	3	706	Rural: Remote
<b>Alaska School Districts</b>							
<b>Alaska Gateway SD</b>	AK	18,686.70	404	8	10	150	Rural: Remote
<b>Aleutians East Borough SD</b>	AK	6,982.20	249	7	8	111	Rural: Remote
<b>Bering Strait SD</b>	AK	22,949.60	1,904	15	20	229	Rural: Remote
<b>Copper River SD</b>	AK	23,535.60	448	6	12	165	Rural: Remote
<b>Delta/Greely SD</b>	AK	5,602.90	851	6	21	293	Rural: Remote
<b>Fairbanks North Star Borough SD</b>	AK	7,338.40	14,105	35	75	1,075	City: Small
<b>Iditarod Area SD</b>	AK	40,370.50	277	8	11	88	Rural: Remote
<b>Ketchikan Gateway Borough SD</b>	AK	4,858.30	2,293	10	81	587	Town: Remote
<b>Kodiak Island Borough SD</b>	AK	6,550.00	2,524	15	12	761	Town: Remote
<b>Kuspuk SD</b>	AK	11,385.10	369	9	5	93	Rural: Remote
<b>Lake and Peninsula SD</b>	AK	23,650.60	363	15	12	69	Rural: Remote
<b>Lower Kuskokwim SD</b>	AK	21,283.40	4,293	28	22	522	Rural: Remote
<b>Lower Yukon SD</b>	AK	17,611.40	1,965	11	52	421	Rural: Remote
<b>Matanuska-Susitna Borough SD</b>	AK	24,608.60	17,784	45	37	1,496	Town: Distant
<b>North Slope Borough SD</b>	AK	88,698.60	2,006	11	60	680	Rural: Remote
<b>Northwest Arctic Borough SD</b>	AK	35,570.80	2,069	13	46	387	Rural: Remote
<b>Southeast Island SD</b>	AK	6,210.60	211	11	11	90	Rural: Remote
<b>Southwest Region SD</b>	AK	18,538.80	601	8	18	216	Rural: Remote
<b>Yukon Flats SD</b>	AK	52,913.30	245	9	11	121	Rural: Remote
<b>Yukon-Koyukuk SD</b>	AK	60,055.20	1,506	10	12	1,198	Suburb: Small
<b>Lower 48 School Districts</b>							
<b>Box Elder SD</b>	UT	5,745.70	11,310	24	3	1,378	Suburb: Large
<b>Campbell County SD 1</b>	WY	4,797.40	8,826	21	28	1,518	Town: Remote
<b>Churchill County SD</b>	NV	4,930.70	3,675	7	338	1,219	Town: Remote
<b>Elko County SD</b>	NV	17,169.80	9,945	34	5	1,363	Town: Remote
<b>Gallup-McKinley County SD</b>	NM	4,945.80	11,947	37	68	1,129	Rural: Remote
<b>Garfield SD</b>	UT	5,175.20	4,818	10	284	774	Town: Remote
<b>Humboldt County SD</b>	NV	9,640.70	3,517	14	7	931	Town: Remote
<b>Klamath County SD</b>	OR	5,854.90	6,260	22	15	667	Rural: Remote
<b>Lincoln County SD</b>	NV	10,633	973	9	75	162	Rural: Remote
<b>Millard SD</b>	UT	6,601.30	2,987	10	13	549	Town: Remote
<b>Natrona County SD</b>	WY	5,340.30	13,116	35	2	1,739	City: Small

SCHOOL DISTRICT (SD)	STATE	GEOGRAPHICAL SIZE (SQ. MI.)	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOL	SMALLEST SCHOOL SIZE	LARGEST SCHOOL SIZE	SETTING
<b>Nye County SD</b>	NV	18,182.00	5,214	27	3	930	Rural: Fringe
<b>San Juan SD</b>	UT	7,819.90	3,135	14	18	322	Rural: Remote
<b>Sweetwater County SD 1</b>	WY	6,685.60	5,607	17	12	1,387	Town: Remote
<b>Tooele SD</b>	UT	6,941.20	14,324	28	20	1,602	Town: Distant
<b>Washoe County SD</b>	NV	6,302.40	65,550	115	8	2,297	City: Midsize
<b>White Pine County SD</b>	NV	8,875.70	1,349	11	14	373	Town: Remote

## PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

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