

Weighted Student Staffing Formula Impact Report by Mecklenburg ACTS

Prepared by Carol Sawyer and Pamela Grundy
21 August 2006

Weighted Student Staffing Formula Impact

CMS instituted a Weighted Student Staffing Model to allocate teaching staff for the 2006-07 school year. The stated goal of the formula approach was to “provide a more equitable distribution of resources available for differentiated staffing to address the unique needs of students in all of our schools.” (memo to all principals, Feb. 2006 from Frances Haithcock)

Unfortunately, the model as implemented for 2006-2007 has fallen well short of CMS's central goal of improving student achievement, especially in schools with high percentages of free and reduced lunch (FRL) students. Specifically:

- Changes in teacher allotments did NOT address the academic achievement gap in high FRL% schools.
- Elementary students in schools with greater than 60% FRL lost teachers yet, these schools have the lowest percentages of children on grade level.
- Elementary schools with less than 45% FRL met ABC Goals – many gained teachers
- Middle schools above 50% FRL lost teachers – 75 % of these schools received "no recognition" on state ABC goals.
- All middle schools at or below 40% FRL met or exceeded ABC Goals – many gained teachers

How the Formula Works:

The formula used by CMS staff assigned a numerical weight of 1.3 to students eligible for FRL. New, standardized teacher-pupil ratios were applied to all schools. Differential staffing based on “Focus” designation was eliminated. (The formula used in previous years allocated extra staff positions to schools with especially high poverty levels, which were known as "Focus" schools.)

The graphs below reflect the net change in teacher allotments from 2005-06 to 2006-07 for elementary and middle schools. The blue bar graphs show the net change in teacher allotment by percent FRL students. The net change, supplied by CMS, compares last year's formula with the new Weighted Student Staffing model. (None of the changes shown is due to changes in a school's population from last year to this; they only reflect the change produced by using the new formula.)

You will note that schools just below Focus level gain positions. This is a positive development, as those schools needed more positions. However, you will also clearly see that schools with higher FRL percentages LOSE positions. High performing schools with low FRL% GAIN teachers.

Where "Reserve" positions figure in

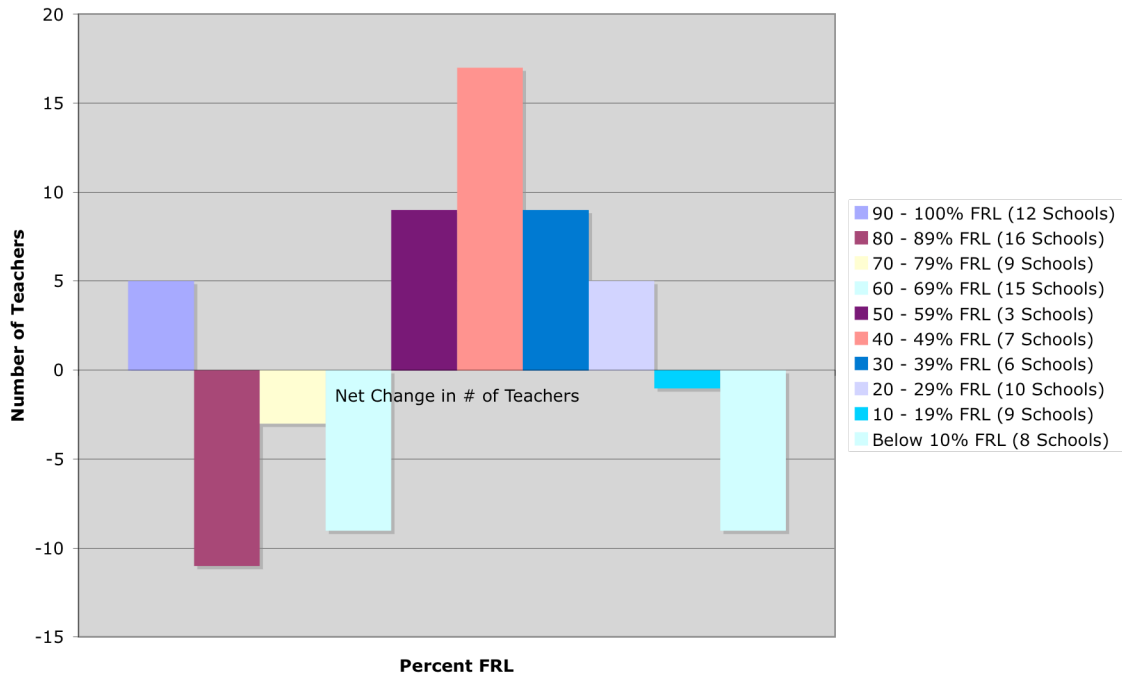
CMS allots additional positions outside standard funding formulas. These "Reserve" positions have also changed for 2006-2007. The yellow bar graphs show the net change in teacher allotments under the combined influence of Weighted Student Staffing and Reserve allotments. The impact of the Reserve position redirection is most dramatic in elementary schools with more than 90% FRL students. Last year, those 12 very high needs schools were allotted 19 teachers. So far this year they have received only 1.

Action Plan:

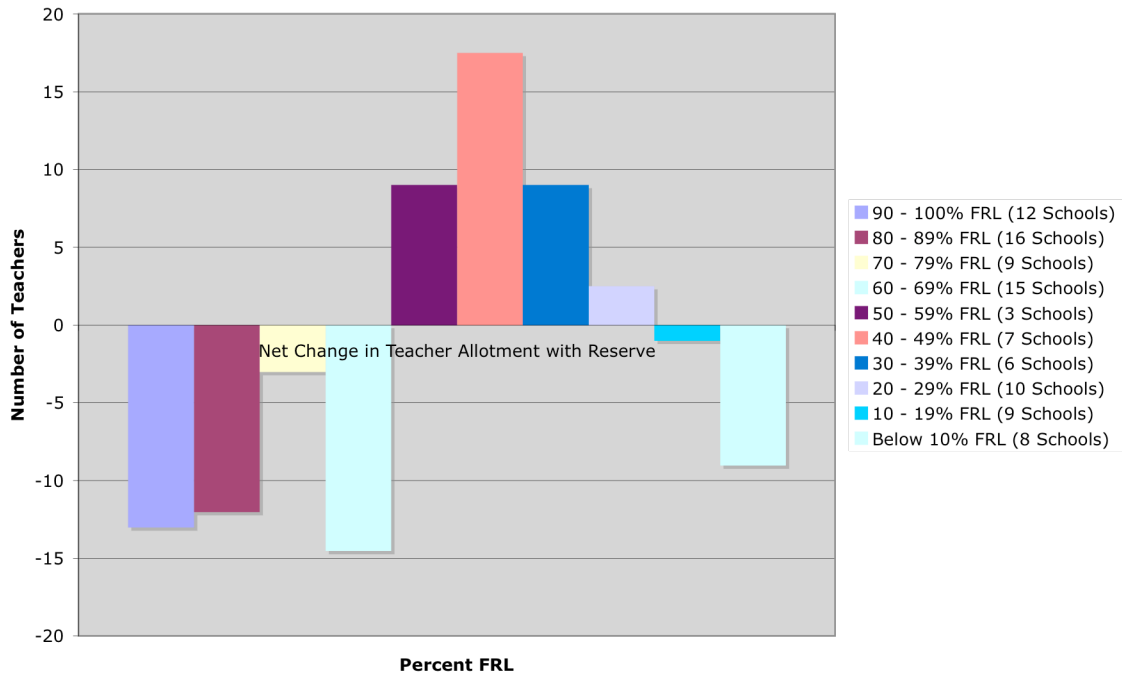
Unfortunately, data for this analysis was not made available in time to overhaul the teacher allotment formula this budget year. There are however, actions which Mecklenburg ACTS recommends be taken now.

- The 20th day of school is a time when teacher allotments are redistributed based on actual student attendance. As many corrections as possible must be made at that time to move teachers not only to schools with attendance growth, but to high-poverty schools which lost teachers under the new plan.
- Next year's teacher allotment formula must support the academic needs of children at high-poverty schools (45% and above). The formula must be made public and data available for analysis before implementation.
- In future funding formulas the top priority must be ensuring low teacher pupil ratios at high poverty schools. Research shows clearly that significantly smaller class sizes boost student achievement and help attract and retain high quality teachers.

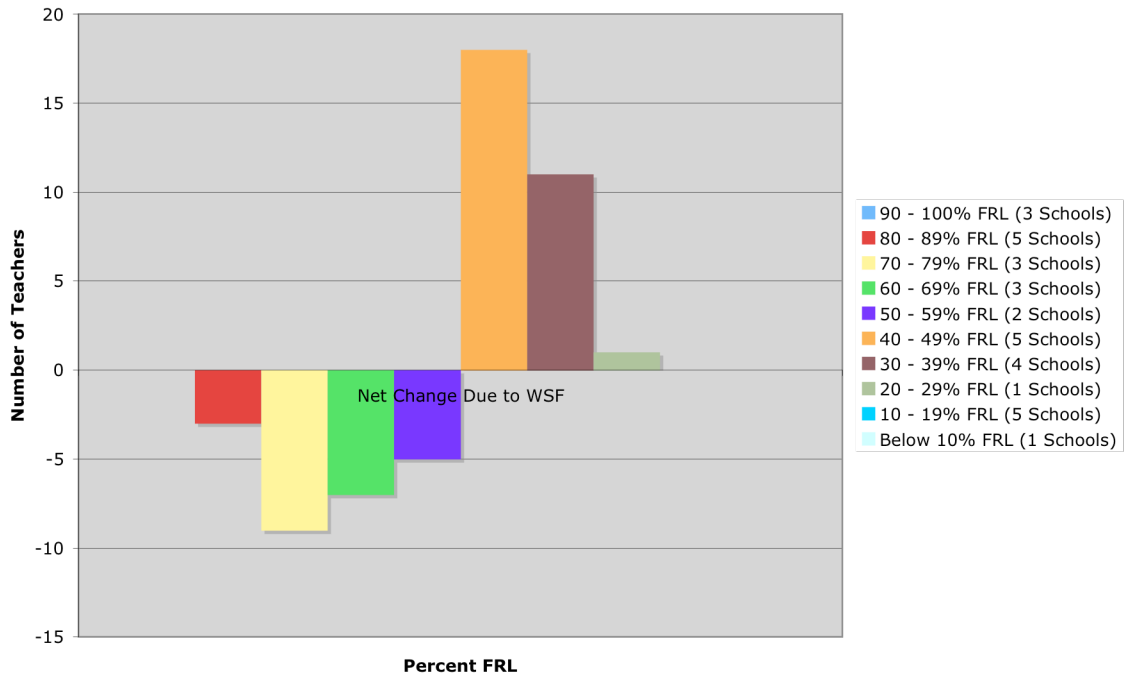
Elementary: Net change in teacher allotments due to WSS



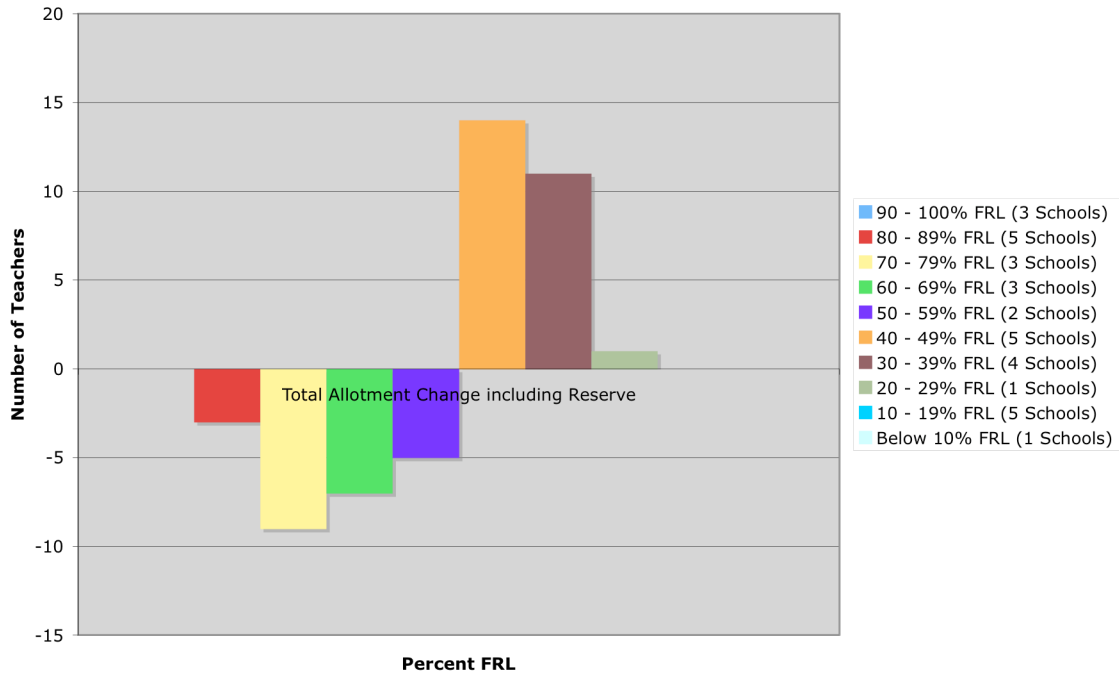
Elementary: Change in Teacher Allotment due to WSF & Reserve



Middle School: Net change in teacher allotments due to WSS



Middle School: Net change in teacher allotments- WSS & Reserve



Note on data:

Reserve positions do not include those allocated to Horizons Program at Barringer or foreign language immersion teachers at Smith

Reserve positions include here count only regular classroom teaching positions. Art & music, T.A.s, A.P.s, etc., not included