

Reduce average sixth or ninth grade ELA and math class sizes from 25 to 15 students.

Supporting students through the transitions to middle and high school is critical to their success. Rather than making across-the-board class size reductions, consider transitional support to keep struggling students on track at a time when many are referred to costly special services.

0.7%

CONSIDER

Class size reductions most often benefit core academic classes with fewer than 15 students. In certain circumstances, Title I-A or Title II-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Provide intensive tutoring to the 10% of students who need the most help.

Leaders can assign existing staff to tutoring positions or activate outside partnerships.

2.2%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title I-A, Title III-A, or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Offer four weeks of high-quality summer learning to 35% of students districtwide.

Leaders should prioritize students with the greatest learning needs for these programs.

2.5%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title I-A, Title III-A, or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Provide all students with 90 minutes of weekly, small-group sessions.

Leaders should choose a personalized learning strategy that meets students' needs and aligns with school strategies.

2.5%

CONSIDER

Personalized learning strategies are most effective when they transform—rather than supplement—the traditional classroom experience. In certain circumstances, Title I-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Offer 20% of staff \$1,000 stipends to lead outreach to families in low-income areas.

Staff circulates information about application deadlines, specialized programs, and advanced coursework in families' home languages. These materials should include the coursework assignment process, the types of courses offered, the benefits of taking courses, waived fees, and course requirements.

0.2%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title III-A and Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Create student affinity groups and provide stipends to facilitating staff members.

Affinity groups give students with shared identities safe spaces to talk about relevant issues and take action to create a more equitable experience.

0.1%

CONSIDER

Consider assigning a staff member or teacher with a shared identity relevant to the group to facilitate. These leaders can help transform the discussion into action. In certain circumstances, Title III-A, or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Provide two hours of daily adult-supervised after-school programming for 25% of students

Programs should prioritize students who wouldn't otherwise have access to after-school enrichment. Programs could focus on core academics, homework help, arts, SEL, or athletics that meet local demand and need.

1.3%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title I-A, Title III-A, or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Hire more guidance counselors in schools with below-district-average student-to-counselor ratios.

Guidance counselors play a critical role in post-secondary preparation and course planning.

0.2%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title I-A or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Ensure standards-aligned curricula is high-quality, empowering, and culturally responsive.

This strategy works best when leaders also provide all schools with new ELA and math curriculum.

0.7%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Provide students with intensive mentoring services for social-emotional support.

Principals can offer stipends to existing school staff or use community partners as mentors for individual or small groups of students. Consider targeting 25% of students in grades 6-12.

1.0%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title-I A or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Provide principals with two weeks of need-based professional development from district supervisors.

Tailored professional development equips principals with strategies and tools to address their schools' unique challenges and improve overall performance.

0.1%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title II-A, Title III-A, or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Offer 20% higher principal salaries at the lowest-performing schools to attract top talent.

Strong leaders who create a culture of achievement, attract high-quality teachers, and engage the community are critical for improving low-performing schools. Offering incentives can make challenging work conditions in these schools more attractive.

0.1%

CONSIDER

This strategy significantly impacts a small percentage of students. Salary increases often aren't enough, so consider other incentives like staffing, scheduling, and instruction. In certain circumstances, Title II-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Create pipelines that enable paraprofessionals to work full-time while completing their degree.

Paraprofessional-to-teacher pipelines can help diversify the teacher workforce and create stronger long-term teacher retention.

0.2%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title II-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Create a teacher residency model to shelter and develop new teachers.

Leaders should staff four residents at 25% of the schools in their districts. This strategy requires leaders to expand their partnerships with local education programs to place candidates and provide residents with co-teaching and co-planning opportunities with an effective mentor teacher.

0.4%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title II-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Give \$3,000 annual stipends to 15% of teachers who serve as leaders or mentors.

Districts typically pay teachers based on experience and education levels, but research shows that neither correlate to improved student performance. Instead, redesign your compensation system to reward your best teachers for taking leadership roles.

0.2%

CONSIDER

The impact of performance-based teacher pay approaches vary, so leaders should consider redesigning compensation carefully and work with teacher unions. In certain circumstances, Title II-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Hire instructional experts to increase observation cycles and reduce teacher:coach ratios to 15:1.

Content-based expert support is an integral part of professional development and job-embedded support is most effective. When teacher-to-expert ratios are too high, experts can't provide the deep support teachers need to improve.

1.6%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title III-A or Title IV-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Increase all teacher salaries by 2%.

While leaders often employ across-the-board salary increases to help increase investment in instruction, they're almost always a less strategic choice.

0.8%

CONSIDER

Leaders should raise teacher salaries as part of a comprehensive compensation redesign effort. Across-the-board raises can be expensive and likely won't yield desired improvements in teaching effectiveness.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Create bi-weekly, 45-minute collaboration opportunities for teams with shared students.

Teams include teachers who share students and support staff, such as counselors, social workers, and mentors. Teams should meet at least monthly, during the school day, professional learning time, or faculty meetings. During this time, teams can hold conversations about individual student needs and create action plans to provide necessary supports.

0.8%

CONSIDER

In certain circumstances, Title I-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Offer four hybrid courses with cross-school remote participation to increase course access.

Remote instructors teach these new electives or advanced courses, which include half as much synchronous learning time as other courses, allowing leaders to offer them at lower costs.

0.4%

CONSIDER

In-person learning coaches, such as paraprofessionals, should supervise students in these settings. These coaches support and motivate students as they progress through the course. In certain circumstances, Title I-A federal funds could be allowable.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Reduce central-office and district overhead by 10%.

Leaders can save money by revisiting central-office functions, restructuring work processes, automating clerical tasks, and using electronic data systems.

-0.8%

CONSIDER

Consider streamlining access to information with data systems, reducing highly specialized budget analysts, and integrating specialized work into the finance team. For example, a director-level position could be eliminated and managers could report directly to the executive director.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Pair and assign teacher residents to teams with multiclassroom leaders to fill vacant positions.

This gradual on-ramp to teaching makes the job more manageable and gives new teachers time to observe expert teachers, participate in collaborative planning, practice skills, and receive actionable, non-evaluative feedback.

-0.5%

CONSIDER

The multiclassroom leader should be the teacher of record and either float between two classrooms or supervise one large classroom with all teachers.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Convert 25% of upper-level electives to off-campus dual-enrollment courses or internships.

Offering off-campus dual-enrollment courses and internships provides students with practical experience and college credits, enriching their high school education and increasing post-secondary readiness.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

To be effective, off-campus courses must align well with student needs and course pathways.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Reduce special education size by 10% by addressing over-identification and revising job roles.

This assumes a 2% reduction in special education aides. IEPs that identify strong student supports that address a student's unique needs, and create flexibility for how those supports can be provided can result in students being served more effectively than by providing additional time with a special education aide.

-0.5%

CONSIDER

Multilingual learners are often over-identified for special education. See OSPI's Multilingual Learner Policies & Practices Guide for ideas on reducing over-identification.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Reduce one high school assistant principal position.

Streamlining administrative roles can create the opportunity to allocate additional resources towards direct student support and instructional improvements.

-0.3%

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Pair residents/ paraprofessionals with expert teachers to reduce high-dosage tutoring costs by 50%.

Partnering residents or paraprofessionals with expert teachers lowers the costs of high-dosage tutoring while maintaining high-quality academic support for students.

-1.1%

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Increase average elective class sizes by five across all grades districtwide.

Class size reductions most often benefit core academic classes with fewer than 15 students. Increasing class sizes outside of those parameters can free significant resources without negatively impacting student outcomes.

-2.0%

CONSIDER

Combining three grade-level classes into two sections of music, art, and physical education, with teachers sharing courses across schools accomplishes this. Increasing class sizes districtwide often requires part-time teachers and differentiated increases across schools.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Increase average class sizes in grades six through 12 by two.

Class size reductions most often benefit core academic classes with fewer than 15 students. Increasing class sizes outside of those parameters can free significant resources without negatively impacting student outcomes.

-1.9%

CONSIDER

Increasing average class sizes districtwide often requires differentiated increases across schools and classes. Leaders should carefully match student needs with teacher expertise and invest in expert teachers for core subject small-group instruction.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Close the four most under-enrolled schools to increase district utilization from 85% to 90%.

Districts can free up resources by closing under-enrolled schools and moving students to remaining schools to fill empty spaces. This savings accounts for the cost of closing a school.

-1.9%

CONSIDER

This strategy might not be appropriate for small districts. Leaders can mitigate the politics of school closures by educating families and communities on the tradeoffs between school closures and other investments and ensuring displaced students enroll at high-quality schools.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Reduce spending in very small schools by 25% by adjusting staffing models and funding formulas.

District leaders can reduce extra costs by flexibly combining staffing roles, using non-traditional providers, and grouping students creatively. Leaders can support schools by providing staffing and scheduling example models.

-0.5%

CONSIDER

This strategy might not be appropriate for very small districts.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Increase average class sizes in seventh, eighth, 11th, or 12th grade from 25 to 27 students.

Class size reductions most often benefit core academic classes with fewer than 15 students. Increasing class sizes outside of those parameters can free significant resources without negatively impacting student outcomes.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

This strategy can help offset reductions made to priority grades or subject areas.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Increase average elective class sizes in two grades from 25 to 30 students.

Adjusting elective class sizes from 25 to 30 students creates opportunity to direct resources to priority academic areas without significantly impacting the learning experience for students.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

This strategy can help offset reductions made to priority grades or subject areas.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Reduce school-based administrative and clerical staff by 10%.

Leaders can reduce administrative costs in schools by centralizing tasks, using technology, and restructuring and automating clerical tasks.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

This strategy often requires leaders to split positions across schools or reduce the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) roles.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS



Eliminate contracts for one-off external professional development.

Research shows that job-embedded professional development is most critical for improving teacher effectiveness.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

In districts with fewer than 75 multilingual learners, joining a Title-III A Consortium can provide additional federal funds to support professional learning. Title IIA may not fund short-term professional learning.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS



Reduce transportation costs by 10%.

Changing walk zones and routes often results in significant savings, and changing program placement, school choice, and assignment policies can reduce net transportation costs further. Leaders should consider leveraging local public transportation for high school students.

-0.3%

CONSIDER

This strategy may not be appropriate for small districts. When changing school choice parameters, consider program/school access, quality, cost, and the impact on equity of access.

BUDGET
HOLD'EM
for DISTRICTS

ERS

