

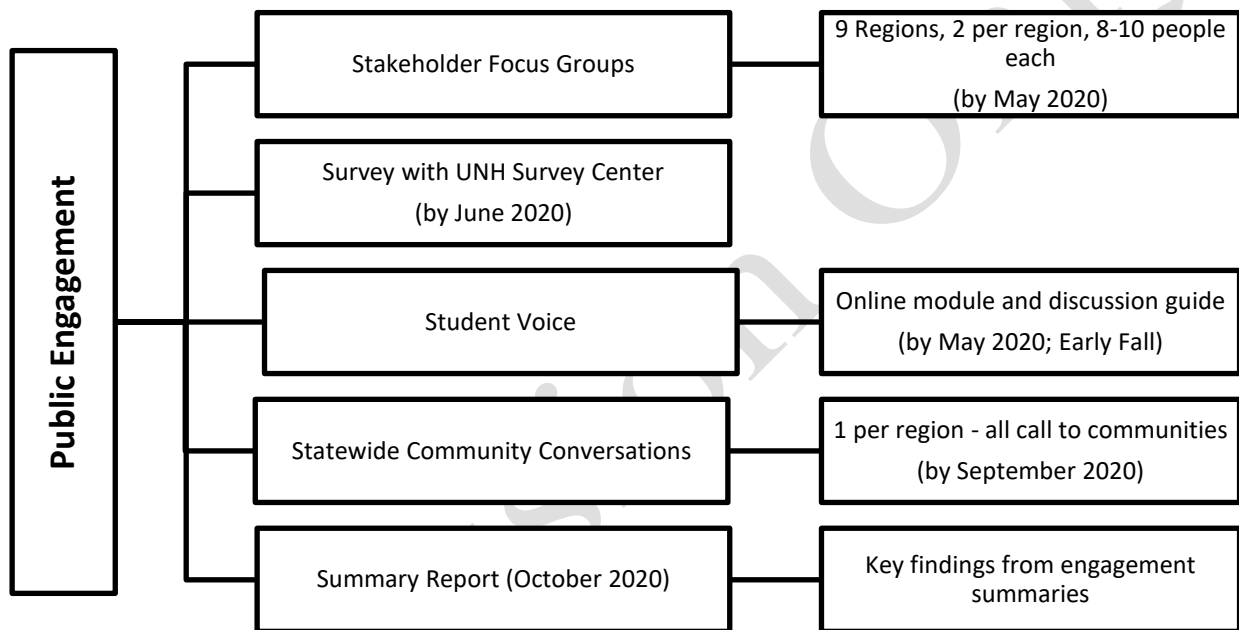
NH Commission to Study Public School Funding Meetings May 7, 2020

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP

Summarized by Carrie Portrie, Carsey School and New Hampshire Listens, May 1, 2020. Overview reviewed by the workgroup chair, Rep. Mel Myler and the Director of NH Listens, Michele Holt-Shannon.

TASKS FOR REVIEW

- Review specific plans for stakeholder, student, and public engagement (including design, key questions, and locations)
- Identify key groups to recruit to engagement events
- Review input from engagement activities and review summaries of that input
- Identify key findings from all engagement activities (What did we hear? What did it tell us?)



SUMMARY OF PROGRESS FOR CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Updates from New Hampshire Listens

Student Voice Design and Partners

- **Online modules for shared understanding** (e.g., Reaching Higher NH is designing 3-5 min. segments to explain school funding – What is the adequacy formula? How did we get here? (governance) What is happening now?)
- **Discussion Guide Draft:** New Hampshire Listens
- **Opportunities for partnership w/ student and youth organizations across state and in schools**

Granite State Poll - UNH Survey Center

- **Timing Options** - July 2020 (start questions draft 6/1) or August 2020 (start draft 7/1)
- **What do we get and What is the turnaround?**
 - They recommend requesting a summary report, can also send raw data
 - Using a web-panel – 4-days, Results and report available a week later
 - *1-10 questions* - Need Information from the workgroups
 - Demographic -- Sex, Region, Level of Education, Income (what else?)

Key Stakeholder Briefing – March 5th, 2020

- NH School Administrators Assoc.
- NH National Education Assoc.
- Career and Technical Education Advisory Board
- NH Assoc. of Special Education Administrators
- NH School Boards Assoc.
- NH Charitable Foundation
- Reaching Higher NH
- Gov's Council on Diversity and Inclusion
- NH Coalition for Business in Education

Questions posed (summary on page 6).

- What else would you like the Commission to consider as it gets started? What questions would you like answered at this early stage?
- What do you hope will happen as a result of the Commission's work?
- What concerns do you have that you want the Commission to keep in mind?

Considerations for Gatherings**Potential Regional Groupings**

- 10 Counties
- 24 Senate Districts
- 9 Planning Regions
- 7 Economic Regions
- Other groupings and partnerships

WORKGROUP COMMENTS – TASKS AND FOCUS GROUPS**Review specific plans for stakeholder, student, and public engagement*****Adjustments/Suggestions about Engagement and Focus on Access during the Pandemic***

- Centered around the logic model: definition of adequacy, full cost of adequacy, equitable distribution formula, appropriations, accountability.
- Align questions across activities (survey, groups, conversations). Workgroup(s) decide.
- The tasks make sense, AND the plans were developed when we lived in a different time.
- Access and facility with technology – what will be gained and lost, what kinds of discussion and ideas may be gained and lost?
- Access for stakeholder groups -- if face to face is not possible. People with limited internet and access to technology. This may be older residents, residents who live in rural areas, communities of color that face economic inequities.
- Keep community conversation to 1 per region

- First need to write common man language for people to understand the input we need.
- Potential Teaching Module and Learning Partnerships
 - Reaching Higher New Hampshire
 - Mikva Challenge to 6 communities: Littleton, Gorham, Groveton, Weare, Henniker, Pittsfield. Middle school students and civics.
<https://mikvachallenge.org/fact-sheets/>. NH Civics led by Martha Madsen.

Learning First - Shared Opportunities so Public Input Helps Drive and Frame Decisions

- Public input to help drive and frame the decisions to be made towards adequate and equitable schools' state funding aid for Public Schools
- All stakeholder groups need a basic understanding NH public school funding system.
- Participants will need a brief common language sheet, then ask about what opportunities and outcomes should all students have to be successful workers and what funding mechanisms should be in place. (less is more)
- Open a stakeholder session with a brief, nuts and bolts tutorial on how the public school budget is funded followed by questions about the method and sources.
- Need a presenter on how NH public schools are funded who speaks in laymen terms and is confident enough to be challenged and able respond to questions.
- Remove some of the false thinking about how school funding works
- Focus on core questions that are fundamental to our critical tasks

Data/Information we Need to Share with Stakeholders

- Examples of disparities
- Need to do some polling? During Zoom meetings? Other platforms such and Polis?
- Basic understanding of how NH public school systems are funded, remove some of the false thinking about how school funding works
- Get to more core questions that are fundamental to our critical tasks
- The Commission's definition of the problem
- Town and regional data on funding
- How other states fund education
- Equalized property valuations, Basic 101 of SWEPT, local property tax needed
- Statistics that show the current performance of children in relation to national standards such as National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)

What questions do we need to ask?

- Do you understand how funding is developed for NH public schools?
- Do you understand how funding is distributed to NH public school systems?
- In your opinion, what are the basic flaws in the way we develop funding for public schools in NH?
- In your opinion, what are the basic flaws in the way we distribute funding to school systems in NH?
- How do we go about, in this state, to go about finding the funding for an adequate education in NH?
- What question(s) do you have about public school funding for which you have not received a satisfactory answer?
- How does the current distribution system for public education work for you? for your community?

- How should public education be funded?
- What ideas do you have for raising and distributing funds?
- Does the state have a responsibility to educate youth? to what level of schooling?
- Does your town have a responsibility to support public education?
- Which groups are positively affected by the current system? Which are negatively affected?
- If education is a right for all NH residents, how would you solve the dilemma of adequate educational funding for every child – moving from your students, their students to OUR students?
- How do we look at funding from a statewide perspective, with reference to the different types of communities we have in NH?
- How can we be sure the extra dollars we assign to schools and education and not end up shear tax relief?

Questions Brainstormed by NH Listens

Big, overall question we want them to discuss: *What are the most important factors to consider in addressing the goal of reducing disparities across and within school districts that result from variations in the ability of communities to raise revenue from property taxes?*

- What are the most important components of an “adequate” education?
- What are the most important variables to include in costing an adequate education? (similar to #1, but linked directly to what should go into a cost formula)
- What “inputs” should be considered in costing an adequate education (e.g., teacher qualifications and salaries; teacher-student ratios; student, family, and community demographic characteristics; depth/breadth of curriculum)?
- What are the most important “outcome” variables to measure in order to understand the student experience and to compare student experience across and within districts (e.g., post-secondary opportunities, test scores, graduation rates)?
- How can a revised funding formula address the historical narrative of “donor” vs. “receiver” districts?
- What do you think are the necessary elements of a funding policy that is bi-partisan and able to solicit wide-spread support?

Review input from engagement activities and review summaries of input

- Stakeholder engagement sessions could be recorded and transcribed
- The summaries, review, and organization of the data could follow a simple qualitative coding design
- Use data organization app or software (e.g., Dedoose, NVivo)

Identify key findings from all engagement activities (What did we hear? What did it tell us?)

- This would be a facilitated conversation once everyone has read through the data.

Who needs to be involved?

Initial Brainstorm – Need to Continue Building and Refining (e.g., by position, advocacy area, interest area, racial and social identity diversity)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>	<u>Who else?</u>
Broad	Taxpayers People of Color Parents, Youth, Alumni Local leaders (businesses, associations) City and town elected leaders Educators 55+ Homeowners w/o children	
Elected local leaders	Select board members Mayors School board representative Town and city leaders	
School Leaders	School leaders (Superintendent and/or Business Administrators)	
Educators	All ranges of educators Higher education Special education	
Students	Varied demographics Alumni Great issues to tackle for Youth and Government student groups who have political interest and not with the general student populations.	
Parents	People of varied demographics Alumni	
Non-profit groups, Advocacy organizations, Interest groups, Foundations	Manchester Proud Reaching Higher NH Stay Work Play Property tax groups Granite State Organizing Project - ORIS Groups working with the Endowment for Health Public health officials/workers PRIDE organizations Involve local taxpayer activists in the community regional groups Special needs and disability rights (e.g., NH Family Voices, AbleNH)	
Business	Local businesses who hire K-12 graduates Business leaders (e.g., Rotary Clubs)	
People 55+	Retirement community representatives	

KEY STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING – MARCH 5TH, 2020

NOTE: This briefing started a conversation. It was not the intention that this specific group would continue to meet. It was to gather information and inform key groups about the Commission, so future opportunities for engagement were contextualized.

Hopes, Concerns, Questions

- *What else would you like the Commission to consider as it gets started? What questions would you like answered at this early stage?*
- *What do you hope will happen as a result of the Commission's work?*
- *What concerns do you have that you want the Commission to keep in mind?*

Notes from Discussion

Start with the Realities and Basics

- We consider some general principles, basic guidelines, for how we go about conducting our business
- Before developing hypothesis and analysis.
- Will there be a starting point where we seriously lay out what the realities are?
- Honest discussion about the true data is – Let's start with how much the state is truly contributing? What property taxes are contributing?
- When will we focus on the state of the state?
- Sending something to the supreme court that they will approve.
- Does the average voter understand this issue?

Unification, Sustainability and Equitable Solutions for Students and Taxpayers

- We are going to treat everyone the same, that we will talk about a constitutionally sound plan that does not burden the citizens of the state
- Unified set of recommendations from the Commission as a whole – the Commission is behind the recommendations
- For all districts to be financially equipped to support all their students
- Equity among taxpayer (treating fairly and equity across districts, one taxpayer to another in same districts, uniform and equality in the burden for taxpayers)
- Equity of educational opportunity for the students
- Quality and equitable educational opportunities for all students
- Develop a sustainable funding support
- Regardless of where you live, students have the opportunity for a high quality education

Name Disparities, Challenges, and Definition of Adequacy

- What's an adequate education cost today? Worth considering how to do this without relying on a uniform number for each student across the state.
- What's an adequate education cost today? Worth considering how to do this without relying on a uniform number for each student across the state.
- New definition of adequate education, what it consists of and how it was derived
- Conversation with detailed and not narrowed by politics or culture but about the disparities that exist and how schools are funding
- Ascertain the true cost of education and all the mandates

- The Commission’s analysis and the expert analysis is that the pains districts face are not at the district level but rather structural forces causing the pain
- Comprehensive definition and funding of an adequate of education without a reliance on property taxes.

Funding streams and contributors

- How will the minimum standards be matched with what other costs come from the Commission?
- How will we ascertain/capture intangible costs (energy, facilities, feminine products)?
- Hope the Commission has the will to recommend funding outside the property taxes
- What about including additional funding like catastrophic and building aide?
- There are intangible items (trauma-informed care, social emotional, etc). There are some things you can’t put a dollar amount on that the Commission needs to think of
- What about the unfunded mandates? What are the unfunded mandates that are outstanding? Will these be considered in the new adequacy funding formula?
- Is a broad-based tax a third rail we won’t touch?
- Find an alternative funding source beyond property taxes?
- Need to focus on what it takes to run a school and students’ needs (e.g., charter schools, special education)

Politics of communication and clarity of purpose/decisions

- Money’s a means to the end which is a quality education, lack of money is the problem
- Public resources are not unlimited
- We are engaged in a matter of rationing (wealthy to those who barely get by)
- Some communities might feel like they are losing something with the changes – change will be harmful
- Make sure this is a bi-partisan process
- Everything is so polarized, that when we talk about solutions, the Commission can insulate itself from the political “noise” and make a sound decision
- The legislature and the governor will not do anything about what is decided and the can will just be kicked down the road.
- Political barriers and agendas
- Bi-partisan – make sure legislature and governor pay attention to what the Commission does – the possible and the hope for bi-partisan support exists - Send bullet points and information to the legislators on a regular basis, Make legislatures see
- Not losing site of the people and personal part of this
- We can’t be all things to all people
- Careful of creating a politically charged funding war across the state
- Fear in the public-school system of speaking and being honest, we need to lay out the data in terms of funding (e.g., charter and cuts in certain areas like special education)
- Concerns about people on fixed incomes and who are retired not wanting to contribute their taxes, population under the radar regarding property taxes

Creative and thorough solutions

- Pay attention to all the court decisions and not operate like the decisions don’t exist
- No Mickey Mouse formulas like the current law
- Need creative solutions the legislature can embrace
- We figure something else, we solve it, then the legislature decisions will slide us back
- We need to keep in mind what’s working and what’s not in terms of student outcomes