Commission to Study School Funding (RSA 193-E:2-e)
Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2pm via Zoom Webinar


Welcome/Call to order/tech check:
Rep. Luneau welcomed everyone in attendance, called roll, and opened the meeting. Chairman Luneau thanked the Carsey School staff and commission members for all the time and effort they are putting into this commission process.
Rep. Mary Heath gave an update on the STRRT taskforce. Mary moved that the chair of the commission request the survey and information resulting from a survey to parents and educators conducted by the STRRT taskforce. Motion seconded by Mel Myler. The survey was sent by the commissioner of education and DOE to educators and teachers, asking about reactions to online instruction and other questions. Noted as particularly salient were access to schooling, and IEP students. Rick noted that the survey will be released, but that it may simply be a few weeks away from data release (and so a request may not be necessary). Barbara expressed a need for the commission to be heading in the same direction as the DOE. Rick noted that he would prefer it to be a more informal request rather than a vote. That is the direction the commission decided to move in. Jay noted that requests from school districts to receive CARES money might be documents that would help the commission in its work. Corinne noted that it is difficult to answer some of the questions in the request for money, since it is geared towards online learning. Jane mentioned that to the extent that the STRRT taskforce is recommending redesign of education, it is important for the commission to consider. Chris noted that almost all states are looking at online education in various ways and adaptability. Part of adequacy is adaptability – there are costs and aspects related to that. John asked about having the commissioner come to speak with the commission, Dave agreed that was a great idea and offered to extend that invite to the commissioner. Noted that previous invitation was declined, although the commission has a good relationship with DOE.

Jay moved to approve the minutes from the 5/11 and 5/26 full commission meetings. All commission members present voted in favor, although Jon Morgan was unable to vote after falling off the call.

Work Groups Reporting Out:
Bruce and Michele noted that focus groups are beginning tomorrow for people who are involved with school budgets. Asked commission members to forward to their networks, Jordan will send out to commission later today.

Jay noted that adequacy has early childhood education presentations coming up, and that building aid would be discussed in more depth later as well. There is an updated adequacy definition since 2008, and the definition of adequacy is informed by both constitutional mandate and statutes and guidelines from the state.

Dave – last week’s presentations were phenomenal. Fiscal Policy will be setting up a SWEPT day. Fiscal policy working on identified tasks 1 and 2 – tracking state sources of revenue and their changes over time. Jay thanked John Tobin and Michael Tierney for their presentation, as well as Erica Ungarelli and Kelly Untiet. Also noted Reaching Higher’s great presentation from a couple weeks ago.

**Design thinking – definition of the problem and empathizing with end users:**
Bruce reviewed the design thinking process and how the commission is working to empathize with parents, students, teachers, and property taxpayers, among others impacted by our work. We want to think about the end users of the systems we are looking to redesign. Bruce had everyone on the commission take a few minutes to think about their definition of the problem we are trying to solve, and then share back to the commission. Each of the commission members then shared.

**The below is an attempt to capture comments, but this is an IMPERFECT SUMMARY:**
Dave shared a selection from a Facebook post – disparate education funding and tax rates.
Susan - #6, 8, & 3, plus a little extra.
Barbara – what should be included in supporting an equitable education? What is included? A whole list of things, but also #6 and #8. Avoiding and getting rid of disparities.
Jane – coming up with a funding formula that allows for equity pre-k-12 so that every school in NH has the same learning opportunities.
Bill – I think that trying to identify “the” problem is a misnomer. Public education funding is a complex system with numerous problems that fall within three general categories: (1) governance issues (e.g., how much decision-making should be delegated by the state to local government units); (2) appropriation issues (e.g., how should state aid be distributed among local government units; and (3) revenue issues (e.g., what kind of taxes should be used to raise the state revenues). In general, NH’s public education system works pretty well, but with respect to 25-30% truly resource-poor districts, the system is failing those most in need. So, the top priority for me is to focus on the appropriation issue, and remedy the broken part by targeting aid to support the resource-poor districts first, thereby mitigating current unfair disparities and burdens.
Mary – need to know where we’re going in education. What do we want a NH graduate to look like and what do we need to put in place to get them there? What does that mean in terms of our fiscal responsibility and formula, and is a formula what we’re looking for?
Dick – The overview is the first two paragraphs of the commission’s assignment (one here, one legal framework we’re working in). Would start with paragraph 3 – affirming what the definition of adequate education is and embracing in that task looking at the parts of the existing definition need to be modified. Figure out what an adequate education is, determine the unit cost (including responsive differential aid for disparities) and then having the cost of education in mind, how do we fund it? Need to do in a fiscally neutral way. Need to fund in a constitutionally acceptable way.

Chris – the problem is to figure out how to target the full mix of education funding resources to those schools that have limited capacity to provide educational opportunities at the level of 21st century quality.

Jay – The outcomes ought to lead to workforce preparation, literacy, and citizenship. Need to equalize our support for opportunity and need to define opportunity for an adequate education.

Iris – To update the definition of costing an adequate education and ensure constitutional education.

Corinne – Local property tax contributions must be based proportionally on property allocation, career and college readiness, differential credit requirements will make things look differently. Remote learning – how does it differ from home learning?

Mel – How do we ensure funding so that students have an equitable education regardless of where they reside?

Val – Develop an equitable mechanism for funding education that will allow students to become productive members of society.

John – A student in the most economically disadvantaged town deserves an equal education to a student in the wealthiest – how do we determine that?

Thoughts on sharing from members:

Mel noted that equity is key in the work we do, and reflects adequacy and also equitable funding. Jay – equalize and equity emerging, in terms of funding and opportunity. Also picked up different definitions of outcomes. Around defining opportunity/adequate education, capacity of different communities to provide equity in opportunity.

Dave – Struck by how important outcomes are when evaluating the opportunity for an adequate education and heard several mentions (directly or not) to fiscal neutrality being an important theme, particularly where it shouldn’t cost one community 10x the effort to provide equitable opportunity that it would in another community. Barbara – thought that equitable was the word I kept picking up on. Equitable opportunities, both for education and for the fiscal aspect. Bill – agree about equitability, but concerned by what people mean by that. He means that the formula that is created restores opportunity in most challenged districts BEFORE a dollar goes to other districts. Opposes the notion of the current formula with base aid equally to all districts.

Bruce – noting two definitions of equity, one for students, one for taxpayers. Iris – agree with some of what Bill says in terms of first to the neediest, but doesn’t think the 25-30% floated is practical. Noted that 70% of districts would be considered “poor”. Don’t know how you can move to system where those districts don’t get any money. Politically unfeasible, also don’t think its
constitutional. Chris – similarities across these items are superficial. A lot of differences in perspective and we need to begin to ground ourselves in where the similarities are and where differences are. We have had a lot of information given, but need to become more specific about where we agree and values and framework for grounding selves and where are there differences that need to be sorted. Moving from what is the problem to what are some of the core aspects of the solution. Bigger differences being masked so far. Bruce – reminded group that we will have more information from AIR about how other states have tackled adequacy and noted that third stage of design thinking is to ideate and begin to think of solutions.

Bruce asked group to look at page 2 of the design thinking worksheet, and asked commission members to think about what might be missing.

Another imperfect summary:
John – one item on the outcome slide is graduation rate. Could be material, and a reliable metric. Struggle with the concept of paying for education locally given what we learned about economic data at the town level. Think we need more than FRPL and equalized value for fiscal capacity, but not sure what we can get reliably.
Val – Fiscal capacity, expectations, and the state needing to provide a common denominator is difficult since NH is not a top-down culture. Will be a challenge to find common ground.
Structure not the hard part, politics much more challenging.
Mel – Age of school, technical capacity, age of staff. School leadership important, but hard to measure. Pittsfield as an example.
Corinne – Inputs should include property wealth, school characteristics should include what capabilities and participation rates for students choosing remote instruction. Outcomes – college and career readiness, new indicators to provide to the state. Equity – support and socioemotional well being (but may be under umbrella already).
Iris – family characteristics, what does structure mean? Fiscal capacity – median family income another measure, but need more/better. School characteristics – full day kindergarten, how many entering students have had pre-k? CTE should be available everywhere. Graduation rates should be considered, don’t love standardized test results. Purpose overall is to create an educated citizenry – is there a way to measure?
Jay – Early childhood education, alternate education, CTE. Many things outside of what we fund currently. What are the extent to which these factors of student success fit into our work?
Proficiency should be part of outcomes language.
Chris – home language (student characteristics), students with 2+ ACEs, family education level, substance affected families, proportion of residential/commercial property, median HH income, history of quality education in a community, access to early childhood opportunities across characteristics, access to internet, leadership of schools, culture in schools/perceptions of choice, student and parent satisfaction, disciplinary pushouts, perceived community desirability, likes the civic engagement outcomes mentioned by Iris, perception of choices/pathways, viable postsecondary experiences.
Dick – Have to recognize that there are disparities impacting cost and outcomes of educational experience. Look to experts at AIR to help explore that. ELL, SES, special education. Tying together inputs and outputs. Want to be informed by research.

Mary – NH will provide a high quality education to all students regardless, want to ensure happiness and potential unlocked. Both as a matter of constitutional and moral. Property taxes should not be the only vehicle for funding.

Bill – Found input/output terms not helpful. Suggested three categories of indicators instead: (1) fiscal indicators (equalized valuation, local tax effort); (2) household indicators (family income, parent education, parent employment, ELL status, pre-school enrollment; and (3) education indicators (test results, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher credentials/turnover, graduation rates, student safety measures). It is our job to measure and present the differences between districts. Should come up with a composite index of all these factors that rank school districts. This commission should come up with the RIGHT answer and then allow legislature to fill out details.

Jane – much already said. Consideration given to exceptional learners (low income, ELL, disabilities, social/emotional challenges). Hope that all students equipped for college/career and successful citizens of NH.

Barbara – ELL, family characteristics should include substance use and justice system involvement. Community characteristics – financial stability of a community and other sources of income. School characteristics – pre-k, full day kindergarten. Extending various career paths, allowing for internships/apprenticeships and getting students looking out to their futures. Alternative opportunities and alternative ways of pursuing opportunities. Much already said.

Susan – Pre-K and full day K access, look at collaboration between schools and businesses. Access for teachers to professional development. Need to get more information to teachers across the state. Access to postsecondary institutions, internships, career and college readiness, as well as civic engagement.


Bruce – hearing a reframing and reorganizing about how we think about these topics.

Iris – Also wanted to mention that concentrations of poverty should be considered at the school level

**Drew Atchison at AIR:**
Hearing conversation has affirmed AIR’s approach for him. Thinks that many of the questions had will be answered. Working on a series of briefs that will be provided to commission and now that contract is signed will send out to the commission. Have 3 briefs ready current – methodological approaches to figuring out an adequate education; detailing approaches AIR will be taking and outcome goals; examples from other states and approaches that they have taken, cost analyses that have been done, review of legislation done in other states, and where
the legislation did (and didn’t match) cost analyses done. Also working on a 50 state overview of different items states include in their formulas for education.
Drew noted that AIR will need reliable data and that will be the next big piece of AIR’s work. Risk analysis also incoming (outcomes and characteristics), and a cost-modeling approach.

**Scheduling/Calendar:**
Dave noted that we have been slowly expanding our ability to participate in remote meetings. Will reserve the last 20 minutes or so for public comment on June 22.

**Next Monday, June 15 – Work Group Meetings.**

Next full commission meeting:
**June 22, 2020, 2pm-4pm via Zoom**

If there are further thoughts, please email Dave, Bruce, or workgroup heads. Jordan will email any public feedback to the commission. Calendar will be sent out by Bruce to commission.

**Documents:**
- Agenda 6/8
- Minutes 5/11
- Minutes 5/26
- Design Thinking Worksheet

Direct public comments to Commission Chair David Luneau at schoolfunding.commission@unh.edu

Comments posted in Q/A Box:
Marcia Garber/she,her/Manch,NH 03:38 PM

school buildings

Marcia Garber/she,her/Manch,NH 03:43 PM

definition of "success"