

Commission to Study School Funding Engagement Workgroup Overview of Engagement Activities and Questions as of August 2020

The following are questions asked during engagement activities from March 2020 through September 2020. This document provides an overview to support the engagement workgroups discussion about what questions to ask during the final focus groups in September and October 2020 (see Engagement Activity Overview).

Activity	Questions Asked
Education Stakeholder Focus Group March 2020	<p>What else would you like the Commission to consider as it gets started?</p> <p>What questions would you like answered at this early stage?</p> <p>What do you hope will happen as a result of the Commission’s work?</p> <p>What concerns do you have that you want the Commission to keep in mind?</p>
Municipal and School Leader Focus Groups June 2020	<p>What are the most important factors to consider to reduce disparities across and within school districts resulting from variations in revenue from property taxes?</p> <p>How does the current funding system for public education work for you in your role?</p> <p>How does the current funding system for public education work for your community?</p> <p>What are the most important components of an “adequate” education that should be considered as part of the base formula for calculating the cost of adequacy?</p> <p>Are there barriers you can identify that inhibit an equal opportunity to an adequate education?</p> <p>What should we measure to know whether students have received a comparable education no matter what community they live in?</p> <p>In your opinion, what is working and what are the problems in the way we raise funds for public schools in NH?</p> <p>In your opinion, what is working and what are the problems in the way we distribute funding to school systems in NH?</p>

	What question(s) do you have for the commission about public school funding?
School and District Employee Survey July 2020	<p>Are you satisfied with the resources available in your district? (Extremely satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Somewhat dissatisfied, Extremely dissatisfied)</p> <p>Do you think the resources in the school district you work are better than the one you live in? (Much better, Somewhat better, About the same, Somewhat worse, Much worse, Not sure)</p> <p>How well does the current funding system for public education work for you in your role? (Extremely well, Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all, Not sure)</p> <p>How well does the current funding system for public education work for the community you work in? (Extremely well, Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all, Not sure)</p> <p>How well does the current funding system work for the community you live in? (Extremely well, Very well, Moderately well, Slightly well, Not well at all, Not sure)</p> <p>From your perspective what are the most important factors in providing an adequate education to students across the state of NH? You can think about factors as what students have access to in their educational experiences at school, and what influences those experiences (curriculum, class size, technology, teacher qualifications or salary, teacher professional development, transportation, maintenance and facilities, special education etc.) AND the outcomes of a student's education such as how college or career ready students are when they graduate.</p> <p>What are the most important components of an "adequate" education that should be considered as part of the base formula for calculating the cost of adequacy? Adequate = required to provide, minimally. This term comes from court decisions that have declared that NH students have a fundamental right to an adequate education, to be defined in statutes, not by the courts.</p> <p>Are there barriers you can identify that inhibit an equal opportunity to an adequate education?</p> <p>In your opinion, what is working and what are the problems with the way we raise and distribute funds for public schools in NH?</p> <p>Provide additional comments here about district resources (what is important to keep, what is missing, etc.) or questions for the Commission</p>

Granite State Poll	<p>Next are some questions about public education in New Hampshire. First, how much on average do you think New Hampshire school districts spend per student? ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT</p>
September 2020	<p>And what percentage of public education costs do you think are currently funded by the state government? ENTER PERCENTAGE 0-100%</p> <p>On average, New Hampshire school districts spend approximately \$19,000 per student each year and the state government pays for approximately 31% (approximately \$6,000 per student) of local public education costs while the rest is covered by local property taxes). In your opinion, do you think that the state government should increase its funding to support local public education, decrease its funding, or keep it about the same? (Increase funding, decrease funding, keep about the same, don't know) (Note: This is formatted similar to questions previously asked about state government funding to UNH Survey Center).</p> <p>In some communities, taxpayers pay less than \$3 per \$1,000 of property value in combined local and statewide property tax to pay for their local schools, while in other communities, taxpayers pay as much as \$24 per \$1,000 in education property tax. Would you favor or oppose changing this so that everyone pays the same property tax rate to fund public schools in New Hampshire? – Strongly Favor, Somewhat Favor, Neutral, Somewhat Oppose, Strongly Oppose, Don't know/Not sure (see NH Department of Revenue Administration - https://www.revenue.nh.gov/mun-prop/municipal/property-tax-rates.htm).</p> <p>Currently, New Hampshire communities fund over 65% of total public education costs with local property taxes. Should the percentage of public education costs funded by local property taxes increase, decrease, or stay about the same? (Increase, Decrease, Stay about the same, Don't know)</p> <p>Would you favor or oppose using the following options to decrease reliance on local property taxes to fund education in New Hampshire? (Strongly Favor, Somewhat Favor, Neutral, Somewhat Oppose, Strongly Oppose, Don't Know/Not Sure (online matrix)) (Note: this question is longitudinal, asked in 1999 and 2002). (A statewide property tax, An income tax, A sales tax, other taxes – insert response).</p> <p>Which of these comes closest to your opinion on what New Hampshire should have for a school funding system? (A state funding system that distributes money to districts based upon differences in poverty and property wealth; A state funding system that distributes money equally to every school district; Don't know enough about this to say)</p> <p>In your opinion, which of the following do you think is most important in order to provide New Hampshire students a high-quality public education? (Please rank your top 5, Higher teacher salaries, Teacher quality, Student and school access to technology, Smaller class sizes, Access to up-to-date curriculum and learning materials, Well-maintained and up-to-date classrooms and buildings, Social, emotional, mental and behavioral resources, Special education services, Public early childhood education (preschool, pre-k, kindergarten), English language learner services, Career and technical education classes, Low-income student services (e.g., free and reduced breakfast and lunch), Other (Please specify)).</p>

BRAINSTORM AND NOTES FROM ENGAGEMENT WORKGROUP'S INITIAL FEEDBACK ON TASKS

Questions suggested by workgroup and New Hampshire Listens staff during initial brainstorm and comment on tasks:

- 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?
- 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?

Comments from workgroup regarding the need to share “Nuts and Bolts” of School Funding for Informed Stakeholder Feedback

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

RSA 193-E:2-E

IV. The commission shall:

- (a) Review the education funding formula and make recommendations to ensure a uniform and equitable design for financing the cost of an adequate education for all public school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in the state.
- (b) Determine whether the New Hampshire school funding formula complies with court decisions mandating the opportunity for an adequate education for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with a revenue source that is uniform across the state.
- (c) Identify trends and disparities across the state in student performance in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 based on current school funding options.
- (d) Re-establish the baseline for the costs, programs, staffing, and facilities needed to provide the opportunity for an adequate education.
- (e) Act as an independent commission.
- (f) Study and produce recommendations regarding all costs and existing funding for special education, including listing any currently unfunded special education mandates issued to date by the state department of education.
- (g) Study integrating into the education funding adequacy formula a factor that accounts for the number of Class A, B, and C properties in a community, and the distribution of education funding costs across those numbers and classes of properties.
- (h) Consider other policy issues as the committee deems necessary. The commission may consult with outside resources and state agencies, including but not limited to the department of education, the department of revenue administration, and the legislative budget office.