

**COMMISSION TO STUDY SCHOOL FUNDING
ENGAGEMENT WORKGROUP
NOTES 8/31/2020**

Attendance: Dave Luneau, Corinne Cascadden, Jon Morgan, Jay Kahn, Mel Myler, and Susan Huard. Carrie Portrie, Sarah Boege, Jordan Hensley, and Bruce Mallory. Public attendees = 6.

Mel Myler called the meeting to order. Corinne Cascadden 1st approval of Minutes and Jon seconded. Minutes carried.

Review and discuss educator survey brief: What stands out to you from reviewing the findings so far? What questions do you have? How does this inform the Commission's charge? Jay asked if we could compare responses to actual data from the state for Equalized Property Valuation Per Pupil levels to see if the sample is representative. Carrie and Sarah will include how low, medium, and high was cut for analysis. Discussion regarding the presentation included the reiteration that property taxes are a concern as well as overall equity across the state. Questions posed and discussion by commission members included:

- What would a state tax have on local ability to raise local taxes?
- Can you take out of this – can we look at this from a state tax and local tax.
- Thinking back to the Charter School presentation and special education weights – thinking about perspectives of Charter school.
- Thinking about the poorer communities and disparities – do we know how they feel about a state tax or a local tax?
- What percent of comments, how many of these comments are directed at – “This is not fair.”
- Mel brought up the challenges of filling the gaps between the inequalities and gaps – Do students have an equal opportunity to enter the workforce? Equity question of outcomes? Is there resolve within the state to recognize the gap and fill it.
- Bruce talked about how the input is from educators’ in the state – these can be considered a professional judgement view of the current funding system and resources – it could be said that there is another side that “educators will always want more money.”
- Jay responded – That we can compare the predominant view of the problem to other groups – Do they all see this as the predominant problem?
- Dave mentioned – Not my kids, but our kids – We have heard contrasting perspectives. We need to look at contrasting perspective of people who perhaps feel differently? What are the perspectives of what education is not in the public interest – what might lend to an overall interest in public education?
- Where does the issue of public issue of education stand, as it relates to the public state of education? What economics bear on people’s perspectives of educational funding?

Mel asked Carrie to put up the graphic of the Engagement Workgroup Tasks.

The engagement workgroup activities will seek to gather viewpoints that differ from professional educators – focus groups with 65+ and taxpayer associations. Carrie said that the UNH Survey Center sent a final draft of the Granite State Poll questions, so that’s moving right along, will ask for feedback on those from commission. Bruce is reaching out to stakeholders who convened in March 2020 to give updates and get additional feedback (what’s missing, what should we be paying special attention to). Already gotten a lot of “yes” RSVPs, so looks good. This will take place on September 9th, 2020. All commission members are welcome to join. Public Comments on Sept 16th and 30th (also on commission calendar) – just in the next month, will continue more in Oct and Nov. Student Voice & Stakeholder Focus Groups Part II – In process right now, coming up with strategies for how to get voices from across the state involved. Input on distribution plan will be discussed during this meeting. Preliminary focus group guide is ready.

Reaching Higher NH is producing some materials that we can share with students ahead of time so that we can have an informed discussion. This will also be discussed today in this workgroup. Need to reflect on what is the most important information to share with these groups. Will reach out to school and district leaders, youth leader groups (like student government, students of color), so hoping for a good showing in Student Voice. September 23rd will be first Student Voice public comment, after that we will do additional outreach. These focus groups will be capped at 30 people each just for staffing and data analysis purposes. Carrie will share student focus group design (questions). Need input on developing educational materials as well as questions. Should we keep asking similar questions? Mel describes that he and Carrie have talked with Reaching Higher, and actually Liz Canada from Reaching Higher is listening in so they were added Liz as a panelist so they could give an overview. Liz describes their product – the video will be from the perspective of a high school student who moves from one community to another, will also discuss the current school funding formula (quick overview), and some information about the commission itself. Just completed final script and a media company is creating some animations for it. Mel asks if there will be a written handout as well. Liz says yes, they will work with New Hampshire Listens to make sure that there are appropriate educational handouts for focus groups. Susan asked if the Reaching Higher video would be available for college students to learn from as well. Carrie describes that there are two ways for students to give input – during the public commenting sections geared towards students, but there will also be focus groups for students. So there will be two different activities where students can provide input. Can also show the video at the beginning of the focus groups to get everyone on the same page before the discussion.

Dave – question to Bruce about September 9th – will it be a posted as a public meeting? Bruce – like the one in March 2020 it will be announced but not posted publicly. But if a quorum of commission members attend then it will need to be retroactively added as a public meeting. But maybe best to not have many commission members there – can clarify with the full commission. Need to be cognizant of the summer calendar for posting.

Mel – what else does the workgroup need to give you feedback on? Carrie – the list of questions that have been put forward to the public so far. Should we continue to have similar questions for comparability? What do we need to capture? Carrie shared her screen with the document of questions. Carrie notes that many of the focus groups had very similar, if not the same questions, but the Granite State Poll questions were quite different. So let's think about if we want to ask similar questions again or if we want to dig deeper with some new questions? Mel – one of the questions I would have is around the adequacy questions and fiscal group and what AIR has presented. Maybe some of these questions would be a bit sharper than these more general questions we have been asking. We might want some more direct inquiries rather than just general questions. Jay – Maybe, it will be interesting to see where questions go. In the adequacy group we are discussing the model and the details of the model. I'm glad to ask the adequacy workgroup about what the big, remaining questions might be. We are now getting some agreement, so what are some of the big questions that we want input on? Dave – I agree with Jay on this. I would also add that I think a lot of the solutions that we might be looking at or might even recommend towards the end of this trip are really based on 12 months or more of weekly, sometimes biweekly meetings, and a lot of unearthing and a lot of detail. And I think the commission certainly needs to be guided by public interest, but with the questions asked at a high level – big questions – so that we get general feedback. Carrie – it's fine if there's time to brainstorm some questions, or we can formulate the questions too (Carrie and Bruce) but just wanted to put it out there for everyone and give an opportunity for feedback/input. Otherwise, we have plenty to work off of. Mel – I think what I'm hearing, I liked how Jay put it, what are the big questions from the public, that would take us to the next level as we begin to engage others in this work. Jay – I should ask, what's your timeline on that? I assume you'll need this pretty soon. And we should think of the audiences. So I think we can probably frame this more generally, but you might want to frame it as there are these five constituency groups, are there certain questions we'd like to ask them all, are some more specific to others, etc. My guess is you aren't going to get

anything for two weeks. Carrie – That’s fine, two weeks is okay. We can start promotion before the questions are finalized. Tentatively October 1st will be the first one so we have some time. I’ll create a table and people can fill out what they think via email and then we can share. Mel and Bruce confirmed with Carrie that the GSP questions were submitted.