

COMMISSION TO STUDY SCHOOL FUNDING 2020

Compiled by New Hampshire Listens for the Commission Engagement Workgroup, September 24, 2020

CROSSWALK OF POINTS FROM PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – SEPTEMBER 2020) – DRAFT 1

1. What are the major themes that stand out across our engagement activities? As you read through this document, take a few notes.
2. What types of outreach may be needed after the Commission completes its study?
3. Review the Commission’s charge on page 3 after reading public concerns. What questions or thoughts persist in your mind as you read these comments and points?

Public Comments (via email, at meetings, and the comment form online)	Education Leader Stakeholder Meetings (March and September 2020)	Municipal and School Leader Focus Groups (6 focus groups with ~50 participants)	School and District Employee Survey (~1700 responses across the state)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reliance on property taxes and a need to slow the burden placed on property owners • Persons with higher property values should have a higher burden of the tax – only equitable way • How will the new formula affect teacher pay? Where teachers want to work? • How will this affect homeschool or private school students, if any? • Pushback on the “adequacy” rhetoric • Opportunities for non-high school graduates and high school graduates who enter the work force • Confusion as to where the money is coming from: is bringing businesses to different districts realistic: “So that folks from other towns will Pay for our kids schooling” – ethics are troubling • How can the funding of schools be set upon a firmer foundation? • Update the low-and-moderate income homeowners property tax relief • Communities that are property-rich have the ability to do even more for students: social and emotional learning; support that goes beyond basic education requirements; college preparation; updated technology – really helped with Covid response • Adequacy isn’t enough – extracurricular opportunities for students • Covid exacerbated / revealed many of the issues in what students are lacking – education is changing • Need for solid infrastructure – right now, so many schools can barely meet basic needs of students let alone budget for other things needing to be done • “Some students get an exceptional education and some students only get the bare minimum” • Issues with the accuracy of census data – Title I formula relies on American Community Survey data • “Folks are acting out of fear of losing their homes” 	<p>March 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with the Realities and Basics • Unification, Sustainability and Equitable Solutions for Students and Taxpayers • Name Disparities, Challenges, and Definition of Adequacy • Identify funding streams and contributors • Keep in mind politics of communication and clarity of purpose/decisions • Make creative and thorough solutions <p>September 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about addressing the politicization of school funding and taxation • Having a district balance on a state versus local property tax is not practical • In the outcome approach, how performance targets could/would impact funding for a district? • Has the Commission discussed excess funds raised through SWEPT and retained locally? • People of color are largely disappointed in the results from the public schools in NH We need assurances that the education system as it stands must be more expansive for people of color so that they can reach their full potential • Wanting an open and candid look at the issue rather than a narrow discussion • Focusing SWEPT as part of the solution may be a distraction from appropriately addressing the issue at hand • Performance targets on an outdated system won’t work Moving to competency-based system • Applauding the work of the Commission overall • It will take courage to make meaningful change that is right, logical, and practical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Tax Impact Local Costs – There are Burdens and Concerns across communities • NH is an Aging State and Considerations of Wealth and Limited/Fixed Incomes is needed • School Leaders are Managing Diverse Needs, Demographics and Funding in Multiple Communities, small towns and districts • Student-Centered and Personalized Learning has become a focus for educators and leaders • Staffing – Teacher Quality and Salaries Matter and Vary by school and district • Specialists Require Creative Local Funding (Mental Health, Wellness, and Safety) • Social and Emotional Services and Curricula has become increasingly important • Access, to Electives and Extra Curriculars Varies by Community, College and Career Readiness, • School Infrastructure, Transportation, Supplies, Equipment are Difficult to Maintain • Access to Technology varies and is increasingly important for students and schools • Leaders are concerned about Special Education and Unanticipated Out of District Costs • Views vary on Student Outcomes and Assessment as well as measures of teacher quality • Economic Factors in Communities/Schools – Need to Compare Spending and Assess Equi • Attention to the Economic Disparity among students -- Poverty and Low-Income Students • Access to English as a Second Language services and supports for students • Outcomes - College and Career Readiness are a focus for leaders • Costs of Funding per Student and Overall • Problems with the Focus on Property Taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents saw racial and socioeconomic disparities as a substantial barrier to an opportunity for an adequate education, meaning, in low-income communities, districts, towns, schools, and families – multiple levels of the system • People also want to see adequate funding for students, so they can have opportunities to learn equitable when compared to peers in other districts • Choosing how and what to fund in communities remains challenging as more people live on fixed incomes or incomes that do not match the rising costs of living in the state • Smaller and more rural districts accrue extra costs in a variety of ways that may include transportation and professional development • The dependence on property taxes in poorer towns creates inequity that is noticeable among residents and school or district employees It is also seen as a problem by medium and high wealth residents • People expressed that statewide resources and equitable funding need to be considered to remove cross-town disparities – rural and urban settings • Access to technology was a consistent concern • Curriculum: Employees talked about well-roundedness and access for all that meets diverse needs, not just standard courses but electives like Art, music, languages, CTE • Supports that go beyond the school day • Local control is desirable in some ways, but it has limits when considering the needs of students and equitable opportunities for positive outcomes • Local knowledge, community engagement, voting and bureaucracy along with unfunded mandates from the legislature or NH DOE can limit decisions and further complicate school funding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People don't like the feeling of how the cost is being spread out --> money is going to school districts, not individual students, which doesn't encapsulate different types of "nontraditional" students • Funding needs to be decentralized • Property tax vs Land value tax • People feeling just generally discouraged by the whole system – shifting one thing about it won't address these issues • Adequate education needs to include educational opportunities for all students – average cost per student is way higher than just meeting the basics This is a big concern across the board • Unclear as to the requirements of funding and implementation • Confusion about the funding formula • Folks want experts to really be able to explain this in the simplest way possible • Folks do not understand where the money is going: the cost of programs, do not have a budget that delineates what we offer and what it costs to provide those programs --> better understanding of how and what is being spent • Lack of uniformity in funding impedes economic development • We have a system where young families don't want to move into the state • Wealth discrepancy in towns with popular/expensive tourist spots (re: ski areas), but low-income levels • How do we build a better school system that folks want to put money into? – Broad, structural changes • People want clear changes in the school system before justifying huge funding increases • Voluntary funding vs coercion funding (?) • Let's get back to the importance of public schools: essential, who we are, the future of NH; "The place to build a future with opportunities for everyone in NH to be their best selves" • Concern that there isn't even enough property to pay for this kind of high-level property tax • Covering the base needs of all students doesn't even touch on: students with IEPs, ELL students, homeless students • Funding is a major challenge in Manchester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring specific types of special education data is reviewed • Special education issues in terms of equity • Wondering about extra funding for districts to become coops – funding dried up • Administer it in a constitutional way • Utilize public engagement opportunities • Concerns about Medicaid and special education aid, and building aid decreases • Impacts of the current crises on marginalized students and students in need • Core moral and legal responsibility for our kids education doesn't stop at town boundaries There is still confusion and resistance here • Crafting a clear and consistent message • The start of a new conversation about school funding in NH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on Grants for Programmatic Improvements Reduces Long-Term Planning Opportunities and also hide true Costs • Smaller Communities and Disparities in Property Available or Building Capacity • Options for State-Based Funding and Reduced Reliance on Property Taxes is desirable to some • Unfunded mandates made by the DOE or the Legislature put a burden on local • There is a need for creative or alternative models, collaborations, regional/county solutions • A Better and Equitable Future for Students in NH - Communities are Unique in their Needs and Resources • Community, Family, and Supports Matter, Need for Local Engagement and Decision-making, Education for Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of funds can be very challenging when balancing multiple community needs • Want for a state-tax and examination into additional revenue sources (lottery, marijuana, tobacco, keno) • Employees talked about basic needs being met including food and practical skills for life that are not just about typical academics, cooking, managing money, data entry etc • Employees having a problem with the term "adequate" feeling like this means minimum • A want for school choice • Funding and resources for charter schools • Class size is a major concern linked with teacher quality, professional development, and salaries • Student performance in terms of supports that are focused on students' basic needs, mental/behavioral health, competency-based learning • Sufficient financial resources in terms of updated instructional materials, access to technology, • Concerns about how COVID-19 pandemic impacts learning and access to materials and learning • Concerned about education while also in smaller working-class communities being unable/unwilling to keep raising property taxes • Challenges with affordable housing and meeting basic needs • Expecting more from teachers or the community resources than what can be funded – leading to teacher burnout and overwrought expectations • Passing unfunded mandates when funding is unavailable or lacking for fulfillment • Staff sufficiency focused on the need for more paraprofessional support in the classroom • Students' who just need their basic needs met is a barrier to an adequate education • No barriers in the school/district they worked in • Consistent work for parents and graduates • Special Education: concerned with adequate support staff and funding that met student's needs with some reference to the need to account for high-costs in local budgets in some cases • Respondents wanted leaders and people who influence school funding and curricula/operations/staffing to think about the whole child and how the community, school, and families work together to support students
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HB2 language regarding Commission June 12, 2019

244 New Section; Commission to Study School Funding Amend RSA 193-E by inserting after section 2-d the following new section:

193-E:2-e Commission Established

I There is established a commission to study school funding

II The members of the commission shall be as follows:

- (a) Four members of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives
- (b) Two members of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate
- (c) Six members of the public, 3 of whom shall be appointed by the president of the senate and 3 of whom shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives
- (d) One member appointed by the governor
- (e) Three members appointed by the chairperson of the commission pursuant to paragraph V

III Legislative members of the commission shall receive mileage at the legislative rate when attending to the duties of the commission

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

V The members of the study commission shall elect a chairperson from among the members The chairperson shall appoint 3 individuals to be members of the commission The first meeting of the commission shall be called by the first-named house member The first meeting of the commission shall be held within 60 days of the effective date of this section Eight members of the commission shall constitute a quorum The commission shall establish a calendar to meet on a regular basis

VI The commission shall establish a budget and hire staff with an understanding of school finance options Such staff shall be independent of government agencies

VII The commission shall make an initial report to the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the senate, the senate clerk, the house clerk, the governor, and the state library 9 months after its first meeting, with a subsequent report to the house clerk, the senate clerk, the governor, and the state library on or before September 1, 2020 The commission shall remain active until and when the general court addresses its recommendations

245 Appropriation The sum of \$500,000 for the biennium ending June 30, 2021 is hereby appropriated to the commission to study school funding established in RSA 193-E:2-e for the purpose of administration, staffing, and the utilization of independent school finance experts Notwithstanding restrictions on the use of moneys in the education trust fund in RSA 198:39, said appropriation shall be a charge against the education trust fund and shall be nonlapsing

