



Budget & Education Working Group

Group B: Teacher Pay, Retention, & Recruitment June Meeting Summary

Below are notes from comments made by the Budget & Education Working Group members.

Narrative:

The group discussed the current challenges in education funding and teacher compensation in Montana. They voiced concerns over inadequate teacher pay due to rising costs and inflation. They emphasized the need for a restructured education funding system and acknowledged the challenges teachers face in the classroom. The group also touched upon the importance of ongoing professional development and access to resources. They emphasized the need for adequate compensation and working conditions to attract and retain quality educators. The group explored potential solutions, including a new funding formula based on the number of teachers required to serve the student population. Innovative ideas were also discussed, such as building apartments above schools and implementing community schools. They also suggested implementing pilot programs and exploring creative solutions to find long-term solutions to the teacher retention crisis.

Discussion Points:

- Teacher Retention & Recruitment
 - Teacher pay is low for new teachers but pay for veteran teachers is also low. Nation wide, Montana still has a low compensation rate.
 - Multiple factors can feed into teacher retention and recruitment. However, it should not district from the underlying issue of teacher salary. Compensation should be a focus and compensation plays into workplace environment.
 - Smaller school districts have a hard time competing with larger school districts.
 - Health insurance costs have increased and negated any raises.
 - Iowa has statewide base pay that was just enacted
 - Discussed tying to more funding to quality educator payments rather than the ANB count.
- Housing
 - Housing affordability a major issue, compensation will assist with this. Many anecdotal stories of teachers leaving profession or state for affordable housing.
 - Can lose new teachers before they start because they cannot find affordable housing to relocate.
 - Leverage different resources of the community.
- Creativity & Flexibility
 - Local control does afford flexibility, encourage creative ways to improve flexibility and working conditions and student outcome.
 - Schedule creatively cannot just overload teachers.
 - Not necessarily a legislative fix.
 - What lessons can we learn from COVID, what creative measures were taken, how were emergency dollars used. How can this be utilized as we transition back to “normal”.
 - As a community don’t focus on the “why nots”, consider new ideas.
 - Pilot programs
- Student needs & behaviors
 - Special needs teachers do not have enough support tin the classroom for special needs students with behavioral challenges.
 - Lack of support for behavioral needs of all students threatens teachers’ safety.
 - New teachers can be discouraged if they do not have the training for classroom management.
 - Even those with student teaching experience struggle with classroom management.
- Minimum hour requirements

- Questions were raised how minimum hour requirements are reached and how creative instruction counts. What flexibility do schools have with minimum hours? Focus on student outcome not just hours.
- Fundamental Increase in school funding
 - Funding sources need to be analyzed and broadened.
 - Creative solutions usually need seed money, we need to identify steady funding sources for schools.
 - Surplus money should be used to backfill the lack in increases of funding for the years.
- Missouri programs:
 - Stipends for teachers who perform extra duties and tasks.
 - Behavioral interventionists
 - Pre-K program for teachers that allow saving for childcare costs.
- Mentorship programs
 - Mentorship programs should be broadened and have more support for new teachers.
- Community schools
 - Food bank, medical facilities, after school and childcare services on campus.
 - This could be helpful for workplace environment for teachers as well as for students.
 - Lack of funding to expand these services as well.
 - Foodbank at schools have helped with community engagement in schools that currently have them.
- Inflationary costs
 - Increase funding based on inflation increases. Utility bills and other costs must higher. Water bill, for instance, must get prioritized over teacher pay.
 - Inflation increases in recent years has not been addressed.
 - Deferred maintenance costs.
- Community Bridges
 - Community agrees that teacher need to be paid more, but communities also upset that student outcome is also decreasing. Shows failures in system.
 - Levy failures show breakdown in community connections.
- Funding formula
 - Base and max budget limits do not reflect needs to educate students. Increasing max budget could stress communities, but could also allow communities more local control.