



Budget & Education Working Group

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

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

Identified Obstacles:

- Hard to get levies approved in areas where multiple levies are being considered. How do we increase community engagement.
- Teacher autonomy
- Teachers are not paid enough, same with police & firefighters.
 - Lack of housing or affordable housing for teachers & other public servants.
- Inflation pressures. Cost of living and cost of health insurance.
- Hard to recruit teachers in more rural areas, eastern Montana. Even in areas where housing is available. Spouses' jobs can make it hard for families to relocate.
- Base budget is set too low and does not provide adequate career pathways for children.
- Collective bargaining agreements not the same across state: varying needs.
- Scope of the problem: how many vacancies are in Montana, how many emergency authorizations?
- Shortage of paraprofessionals & subs, pay needs to be increased for them as well.
- Working conditions: student behavior problems post COVID, manage workload.
- Pro and cons of 4-day school week: depends on community & district needs.
- Cost of college & tuition, hard to pay off debt based on teacher salary. Public service student loan forgiveness takes 10 years, too long.

Discussed Solutions:

- Consolidate resources between smaller schools.
- Ways to provide more affordable housing: Examples from Colorado: Affordable housing for public servants with deed restrictions.
 - Possible concerns: Housing tied to job, they would lose housing if they lose job.
- Standardized statewide base pay- Iowa just passed this. TEACH Act doesn't do enough.
 - Base pay vs median home values to attract teachers.
- COLA: (Cost of living adjustment) should reflect median home value of the district and should be included in base pay. Cost of living varies greatly in Montana, these needs to be reflected in school funding.
- Inflation increase should be tied to actual inflation.
- Squeeze matrix for pay: Lower salaries vs high salary, tighten matrix to increase starting pay for new teachers.
- Separate fund for health insurance, how is current statewide insurance pool working?
- Do not want to take away student opportunities or activities to ensure high enough teacher base pay.
- Where to find more revenue:
 - Where does all the lottery & Marijuana money go now, can some of that money be redirected to education.
 - A sales tax that goes to education.
 - Where does natural resource revenue go/ how much to schools? Compared to Wyoming.