



## **Budget & Education Working Group**

### **Group D: Sustainability & Tax Burden July Meeting Summary**

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

#### **Narrative**

The group discussed the potential of having differing funding formulas for AA, A, B, & C schools, per pupil allocations for educational programs, and the potential existence of under used funds. They also explored the importance of assessing the effectiveness and return on investment of various education programs. The group discussed different possibilities for consolidation of school districts, and shifting the focus from student count to quality educator payments were also discussed. The group agreed that taking a delve deeper into underfunded mandates and potential solutions would be beneficial for the legislature. Concerns regarding the impact of technology on education and how to mitigate its negative effects were also addressed. Throughout the discussion, the group emphasized the importance of community engagement, education, and collaboration.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- Formula Reform Considerations
  - Reforms or changes to the funding formula may be inadequate if funding isn't also increased.
  - Just shifting money around will not address the underlying problems identified by the group.
  - The formula should be based on what is needed, not on numbers of students or teachers and expect that to take care of all the needed services.
  - Some see a need to revisit the funding formula more than ever 10 years. Some also feel that the 10-year review allows lawmakers to wait instead of considering changes more regularly.
    - More frequent full review could be costly, but the discussion needs to happen more often in the legislature.
  - Different funding formula for the different schools and different community needs in Montana.
    - Four different funding formulas, for AA, A, B, and C.
  - Need to account for the different communities. Including areas in the formula that account for cost of living in different areas, and including extracurricular activities and the cost of those into the funding formula.
- Efficiencies
  - Are there any pots of education money that is going underutilized that can be used in another way
  - Is there waste in other area of the government that can be redirected to education.
- Consolidation
  - Very hard to consider closing or combining any schools – community effects.

- Could be better to consider consolidation of districts to share administrative costs and burdens rather than considering closing individual schools.
  - Challenges for smaller communities that could be absorbed into larger districts.
- Federal Funding
  - The group continued to express frustration about the lack of IDEA funding from the federal government.
- Teacher Retention
  - Teacher Salary was again a top priority for group members.
  - How do we provide teachers more time for collaboration and support from peers.
  - Retention is an issue for other positions, including physical therapists.
  - Generational change: people do not stay in a job as long. Are their cultural and generation effects that need to be taken into consideration for retention.
  - Is it reasonable to assume that in the future it may be very appropriate to have teachers that guide education but many of the teachers could be individuals in businesses and professions and who can educate students on various skills needed.
    - Pros and cons, but worth the discussion due to the changing economy and job market.
- Community & Taxpayer Trust
  - How can we better show to taxpayers that what they are paying is worth it.
    - Transparency in funding
- Technology
  - AI and the quickening pace of technology allow for new innovation and hurdles.
  - Funding will need to address the new challenges and opportunities.
  - Changes to education will need to keep up with the pace of the changing world.