



## **Budget & Education Working Group**

### **Group F: Funding Formula June Meeting Summary**

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

#### **Narrative:**

The group discussed such as teacher working conditions, lack of mentorship, workload stress, and lack of preparation for teachers. The group also discusses the funding formula for schools in Montana, with a focus on special education, and considers requesting the state legislature to put pressure on federal representatives to increase funding for special education. There are suggestions to shift base budget funding to 100% from the state and allow voters to decide on additional funding. The group discussed changes to the funding formula, including decreasing reliance on ANB funding and looking at equalization efforts. The group also discusses the importance of building relationships and understanding between the community and the school. The group highlighted that Montana has unique needs with numerous school districts schools, and the school funding formula needs to address the varying needs of different schools.

#### **Discussion Points:**

- Teacher Recruitment & Retention
  - Paying teachers more will automatically help working condition perception.
  - Retention issue areas with bus drivers, kitchen staff, school clerks.
- Inflation
  - With inflation levels where they are, the legislature should increase funding more than the traditional inflation cap level.
  - Make up for the shortfall in previous years inflation discrepancy. Back fill funding – one time “check” for inflation relief while long term solutions are discussed.
    - Budget surplus should be utilized for this.
    - A one-time payment for deferred building maintenance.
  - Cost of Living increases
  - Shrinking calculation from 3 years down to 2 to make it more responsive to inflationary measures.
    - Inflation should be on top of the base number, not included in the base.
- Funding Formula
  - ANB is not an adequate to base funding on.
  - Funding should be based on the number of classrooms needed.
  - Increase base entitlement from state. State should provide 100% of base funding for schools. Then communities will be responsible for additional funding.
  - Expectations on schools are not adequately funded. Expectation on schools have changed, but funded for those changing needs hasn't changed.
  - Additional funding is needed to meet the Constitutional obligation in Montana – this should not rely on voted levies.
  - The size and location of schools should be taken into consideration for funding.
  - Many little pieces add to the funding of schools: IEFA, special education, high risk students.
- Special Education
  - The federal government does not adequately fund their special education mandates.

- State representatives should pressure the federal government to fully fund special education.
- Funding does not adequately address the level of services needed by special need students. Funding should be increased for services from the state level.
- Safety concerns
  - New technology for safety has increased costs. Safety officers, cameras... Larger piece of the budget than previous years.
- Community engagement
  - Levies are failing. It is hard to educate communities on how school funding works and why levies are needed.
    - Perception of mismanagement when levies are needed.
    - Community wants to raise teacher pay but oppose levies. How cannot we address this disconnect.
  - School election have become divisive. Is there a way to lessen reliance on levies?
  - Statewide PTA group
  - Build relationships with and educate parents on education funding & budget formula, school board processes.
- Discussed proposal from committee meetings
  - Appreciate looking away from the focus on ANB.
- Direct the Decennial study to investigate specific areas.
- Revenue
  - Communities cannot afford more local and property taxes. More revenue sources need to be explored.