



Budget & Education Working Group

Group F: Funding Formula

May Meeting Summary

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

Identified Obstacles:

- Adjustments need to be made to how funding flows for special needs, gifted & talented, English language learners. Defined resources for these groups.
 - At risk student payment is not adequate
- Difficulties in passing levies:
 - Average Montanans don't understand how schools are funded.
 - Voting on levies under mines the guarantee to quality education.
- ANB is an inadequate way to determine funding.
 - Enrollment decreases, but still need to teach the remaining students.
- Inflation rate does not reflect the increase of costs currently.
 - Inflation and actual costs of utilities, insurance, salaries need to be taken into consideration.
 - Funding should match local costs of living. What inflation measures should be used.
- How do we inform community better? How do we leverage community resources better: volunteers.
- Assessment standards: puts time & resource burden on teachers.

Discussed Solutions:

- Reduce the decrement amount for AA schools: match high school and elementary decrement.
- Compare what other states have recently done: Tennessee.
- Sliding scale for funding that better relates to tax base or cost of living.
- Change rules on what levies can be used for.
 - Adjust max budgets or allow a higher max budget.
- Inflation; COLA adjustments based on individual areas.
 - Salary needs to mirror cost of living in community.
 - Tie inflation increase to actual inflation.
- Back fill funding: legislature should provide extra funding now to get schools back to a "level playing field" for funding.
- Tie funding to the number of educators needed, not the number of students served. Reduce ANB and increase quality educator payment.
- More flexibility in funds, allow transfer of funds, roll over of funding (no more "use it or lose it").
- Build specific asks for commission:
 - Direct commission to investigate real cost of utilities; wages needed to live in community. What other areas?
- Teacher Housing: Grant program, wages can't increase enough to keep up with housing cost.
 - Schools can use extra land if funding also used.