



Budget & Education Working Group

Group E: Programs & Curriculum July Meeting Summary

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

Narrative:

In July the group discussed teacher salary structures in different states, the importance of addressing turnover and retention of all staff members, and per pupil programmatic funding. The group also touched upon insufficient resources for students with special needs and the potential implementation of a state-funded payment system for teachers. The importance of examining unfunded mandates and administrative costs to ensure schools are adequately funded was discussed. The group also explored school consolidation and different ways consolidation could be approached.

Discussion Points:

Teacher Salary

- Many and different ways to improve education, but priorities need to be made to accomplish this session. Teacher pay is a top priority for many on the group.
- Statewide salary schedule
 - Could be a good model to recruit more teachers in the state.
 - Doesn't pit schools against each other.
 - Does affect local control.
 - Ensure that we do not ignore mid-career and later career teachers when looking to retain and maintain new teachers.
 - Look to how other states have implemented state-wide salary schedule
 - New Mexico –has a statewide salary schedule that is lead and funded by the state.
 - Iowa's recently implemented an increased statewide schedule.
- Further discussion on other states' reforms
 - Tennessee recently did an overhaul of their funding formula. Will have to watch to see the outcomes of the changes.
- Retention of staff beyond teachers
 - Pay for other jobs at schools is not competitive to recruit these positions.
 - Struggle to find employees such as schools bus drivers, cooks, paraprofessionals.
 - Cost to advertise, recruit and train these employees, especially due to high turnover.
- Underfunding Mandates
 - The funding provided at the state and federal levels for state and federal mandates does not provide enough support to provide the services required.
 - Increase in English language learners and diversity of languages spoken.

- ELL, Special Education.
- Could per-pupil allocations for certain services help alleviate pressure on schools and localities?
- Consolidation
 - Pros and Cons of looking at consolidating districts whether it be more extensive or looking at administrative consolidation.
 - Will not look the same throughout state, different considerations will need to be taken into account.
 - Combining administrative district could add additional stressors for administrative staff including travel and workload.
 - Will look very different between rural or small schools and larger urban or suburban districts.
- Cost analysis of schools
 - Would be beneficial to look at a cost analysis and comparison of Montana schools in further details.
 - Compare to other states.
 - Analyze cost increases, help identify areas of improvement or waste, identify areas not as regularly highlighted.
- Pros and cons of focusing on different problems and solutions in education.
 - Group again highlighted importance of identifying the top areas that should be addressed more immediately. The group also recognized that the discussion around education improvements is always ongoing, and solutions will continue to be discussed.
 - Important to continue to discuss long term and short-term goals as well as large legislative proposals and smaller proposals.