

Education Cost Sharing Task Force  
MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, December 15, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM.

Co-Chair Barnes gave a brief rundown of the schedule for the meeting, a presentation by Michael Griffith and then a discussion on the compilation of suggestion that had been gathered from the task force's input.

Co-Chair Stillman introduced Michael Griffith to the task force, who is a Senior Policy Analyst for the Education Commission of the States.

Griffith gave a summary on the different factors other states considered for the developing on their formulas for funding public schools. He talked about the need to develop a formula that was sophisticated without being needlessly complex.

Griffith explained that most of the states are slowly moving towards a foundation program for the formulas. He briefly describes how the foundation formula is made up and explains the different ways to weigh Special education funding into the formula.

Griffith then went through the funding options students who are attending Charter Schools are provided with in different states. He then invited the task force to bring up any questions.

He answered a question on how the other states were funding their Special education programs by explaining that after the cost per student exceeded \$25,000, the funding responsibility was split at a rate of 1:1 between the community and the state.

Another question concerned the states' use of taxes to open up new funding resources and to spread out the cost more evenly.

Dudley Williams wondered whether there was a correlation between cost and Special education state aid programs formulas in place.

Griffith answered in the negative and explained that there was no reliable study on how much and where the money was being spent for Special education even within the single states.

Len Miller stated that there were approaches that include spending more money on pre-school education to lower the amount of students that would need Special education later on and asked whether there were any states that were making use of this approach.

Griffith declared that this was indeed the case; states like Oklahoma used this approach to reduce their total spending on education, since the cost of pre-school education is much lower than the cost for special education.

Another question concerned the best way to measure wealth and she also inquired after Connecticut's status among the New England States.

Griffith answered that the best way to measure wealth was to measure the property tax per student and the capita income per student and then mixing the two. He assessed the Connecticut formula as adequate in that regard but criticized the old data being used to measure income. He judged that CT was behind some of the other New England states regarding funding.

Elsa Nuñez wondered whether there were any attempts to include performance levels into the formula in other states.

Griffith answered in the affirmative but questioned the success of these measures.

Williams inquired whether the problem of developing a formula that was not fully funded was widespread on the national level.

Griffith replied that this is indeed the case and explained that even a fully funded formula could become not fully funded within the span of a year, emphasizing the need for readjustment.

Chairperson Stillman inquired on two topics: the national funding for transportation and capital.

Griffith explained that most states did not provide capital funding and had moved on to a system of setting up optimal routes of transportation and covering 50% of that cost.

Portia Bonner inquired as to whether there was a higher efficiency in allocating money in states that had a county or regional system.

Griffith replied that based on the experiences of other states he doubted that consolidation would lead to saving a lot of money in regards to funding in education.

Griffith responded to a question on whether or not the measure of court-mandated funding was successful by explaining that the results had been mixed in other states and that it was often too soon to tell if these measures made a difference.

Griffith reminded the task force that “fully funded” didn’t mean exactly the same thing in every state. A state can have a fully funded formula in place and still spend less money on education than a state that isn’t.

Griffith recommended a new formula for Connecticut that takes into account not only the traditional schools but also some of the Choice Program Schools. He also advised to roll the weights on Special education into the formula.

Co-Chair Barnes wondered whether there was a national trend that showed additional funding leading to communities cutting back on their own spending.

Griffith answered that this was not the case, even though some states have done so. He then spoke briefly about local funding rates in other states and how states were nationally coping with these requirements made of them.

Miller wondered how the money already being spent could be distributed more effectively to lessen the achievement gap present in Connecticut.

Griffith replied that the ideas on efficiency differ so greatly even from study to study that there had not been a conclusive agreement reached about how to include effectiveness into the formula.

Mary Loftus Levine asked about a more detailed report on the system used in Vermont, where property tax is being collected and then re-distributed for educational funding.

Griffith gave a brief description of the Vermont system.

Co-Chair Barnes thanked Griffith for his time and asked to hand out the copies with the list of suggestions that had been gathered from the last meeting. He expressed his wish to go over the list and agree on proposals that are generally agreed on.

Mary Loftus Levine pointed out that most of the proposals on this list were very complex and therefore suggested marking them as conceptual in the report.

There was some discussion on the upcoming process of how to rank the suggestions and how to include them in the report. The task force agreed on each member picking 10 out of the 49 proposals and for the staff to group the proposals with similar numbers of votes together.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.