

Education Cost Sharing Task Force  
MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, January 6, 2012

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

Co-Chair Stillman announced that the next two meetings would help contribute to finalize the interim report the task force was drawing up for Governor Malloy and that the discussion would circle around the list of proposals the staff had produced from the task force's previous discussions.

Co-Chair Barnes reminded the task force that the items on the list would only go into the interim report but that neither the list nor the report should be used as an indicator for what the task force's actual recommendations would be in October of 2012.

Mark Benigni expressed that he didn't completely agree with the highest ranked items on the list and that some of the proposals that didn't make the "Top Nine" probably would have if they had been phrased differently.

Dudley Williams expressed similar concerns on how some of the items were phrased.

Senator Toni Harp pointed out that while fully funding the formula would be a proposal everyone would be able to agree on, she did not think that the goal was realistic given the current financial situation.

Chairpersons Stillman and Barnes agreed that there should be a discussion on the topic, but stressed the importance of fully funding the formula.

Mary Loftus Levine suggested to have a recommendation for a fully funded formula in the interim report but to recommend a phase-in approach for the full funding.

William Davenport suggested combining two of the items on the list into one proposal: fund Magnet Schools, Charter Schools, Technical School, Vo-Ag Schools and Agricultural Schools equitably.

Sergi agreed with Barnes who wanted to replace the term 'fully funded' with 'increased funding' in order to make the formula and ensuing funding more predictable to the single districts.

Benigni suggested making funding conditional on whether or not schools made themselves accessible to a large range of students.

After some discussion the task force's members agreed on combining two items on the top ranked list into a new proposal including supporting measures to increase funding, updating data (wealth, poverty, foundation) and making the grant program more predictable on a year-to-year basis.

(37.00: Sheff magnets, Sergi agrees with Stillman on trying to get the increased funding for Magnets not in Hartford, seeing as there is racial isolation in Bridgeport/NH as well) even though the ruling of Sheff vs. O'Neill was upheld.)

Harp pointed out that in some cases the blame for underfunding schools was rather to lay on the local communities than the state.

Elsa Nuñez remarked on the importance of transparency and accountability to counteract the suspicions that money allocated for education wasn't being spent on education and suggested to have a serious conversation about expanding the number of schools being considered for the formula-based funding.

Davenport expressed that in his opinion pre-kindergarten education funding should get its one item on the list.

Sergi concurred on making early child education a major item.

There was discussion on whether or not the term "equitable" should be included in the statement about the funding of the Choice Program Schools.

After a suggestion from Levine, Co-Chair Stillman agreed that the interim report should include some indication of working the accessibility factor into the formula, therefore rewarding schools that accepted students from a broad range of backgrounds.

Harp pointed out that the problem regarding preschool programs was not so much underfunding as it was licensing and space issues.

Portia Bonner expressed her wish to include a statement in the report that reminded the public that all children in Connecticut were to receive adequate education.

Sergi suggested combining various items on the list into one single proposal that recommended funding based on performance, conditions and transparency.

Harp reminded the task force that there were already several accounts to track where the money going into the education of a student was going to exactly.

Williams recommended having a statement in the report that referred to the fact that additional funding would be made available for those schools that were doing well in narrowing the achievement gap.

Nuñez concurred and added that the implementation was the Commissioner's, not the task force's job.

Co-Chair Stillman objected to the combining of accountability/transparency, performance and conditions as factors in the formula into one single proposal.

Benigni suggested conditional instead of competitive funding in the phrasing of the recommendations.

Barnes replied that the competitive factor was not to be used for the basic funding formula but rather as an incentive for schools to do better in trying to close the achievement gap.

Harp pointed out that by using the word 'competitive' the task force was not really aiming at the segment of schools they were looking to target for additional funding.

Sergi and Stillman agreed that Special education and preschool funding should each be entered as separate items in the report.

The task forces agreed on including ELL students and gifted and talented students in the Special education section in the report.

Co-Chair Barnes gave a brief outline of the upcoming events: the release of the interim report and then the appendix that included the documents being used for the recommendations and the task force's decision process.

Levine suggested using the interim report to let the public know that the task force was interested in meeting with other interest groups that could contribute to the subject, which was met with general agreement by the task force.

John Moran explained one of the methods already in use to examine whether or not the communities were actually spending the money allocated by the state on education.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.00 pm.