

Summary of School Funding Interim Commission Meeting, September 23, 2015
prepared by Pad McCracken, Commission Staff

Administrative matters

- Adopted interim committee guidelines (no proxies)
- Elected Sen. Facey as Chair, Sen. Arntzen as Vice Chair

1. Input received on school funding priorities

- Survey—recruitment and retention; adequacy of state’s share; equitable distribution; educational programs to meet accreditation standards; at-risk students
- OPI—facilities and debt service GTB; special education (cooperatives and inflationary increases)
- BPE—adequate funding to recruit and retain quality educators, admin, and staff
- Public comment—families and advocates for special education (grad/funding age; adequate funding for quality); families and advocates for gifted and talented; TIF districts
- Ed community—recruitment and retention; facilities; special ed (inflationary increases)

2. School funding in Montana—from 50,000’ overview to nitty gritty of district general fund budget

3. Commission resources and work plan

- GIS map from MSL; GEMS “Data Warehouse” from OPI; Mike Griffith from Education Commission of the States
- The commission determined to meet next in January 2016 for a multi-day meeting [determined following the meeting to be January 11-13] and investigate four topics listed below and possibly some of the additional topics following some reflection and an online poll of commissioners

Topics for January

- Recruitment and retention
- Facilities
- Special Education (inflation factor and grad age/funding cutoff)
- District structure and boundaries (efficiencies; voluntary consolidation; impacts on taxation and transportation)

Other topics for consideration [from meeting “parking lot”; ranked in order of priority based on online poll of commissioners following meeting]

1. Health Insurance
2. Levy system
3. Fund reserve limits/local flexibility
4. Technology
5. Equity issues (small schools; decrement)
6. How to fund increases/revenue sources
7. Predictability of funding
8. Determining the costs of education
9. Open enrollment
10. Federal role in ed funding
11. American Indian Achievement Gap
12. Middle school model and 6th grader funding
13. At-risk students
14. Demographic changes; a formula for the future
15. Gifted and Talented
16. Budgeting timelines