



# Blue Ribbon Task Force on School Funding

## QUALITATIVE DATA REPORT – *in brief*

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### Constituents Seek Meaningful Action

The citizens of South Dakota that voluntarily participated in this data collection process perceive a current or looming crisis in education. They seek bold, urgent and meaningful action to retain quality educators and to ensure a pipeline of future educators to provide appropriate learning experiences for South Dakota students. Competitive salaries and benefits have been identified as a major factor in accomplishing this task.

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*“What possibilities are there to meaningfully fund education for our kids and our communities?”*

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#### **When you think about funding schools in your local community, what is important to you?**

- Recruiting and retaining high quality staff; increasing teacher pay, incentives, and benefits
- Quality education; learning opportunities addressing the diverse needs of students
- Stable and consistent funding mechanisms for education; fair and equitable tax structure for funding mechanisms

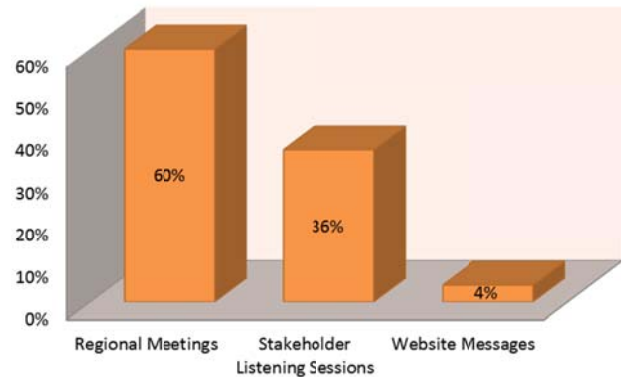
#### **High Quality Opportunities for Student Success**

Constituents expressed interested in students having a variety of quality learning experiences in order to prepare them for careers, post-secondary success and to be productive and contributing citizens. Concerns were expressed about the learning conditions for students and about the teaching conditions for educators. Schools need adequate infrastructure, technology and materials to support high levels of learning.

#### **What advice do you offer to the Task Force as this work moves forward?**

- Be bold, take action, be timely, be transparent, communicate progress, cross party lines, follow-through
- Promote education positively as investment; make education a priority, put kids first
- Identify new revenue stream designated for education

Venue Participation by Percentage



#### **New Revenue and Equitable Funding for Salaries and Benefits**

Increasing salaries and benefits in order to retain and recruit high quality teachers has implications for school funding. Suggestions offered as cost saving measures across venues included increasing efficiencies, cutting non-essentials, relying on more technology, sharing services and partnering with the business community. Identifying new revenue sources emerged as the most prevalent theme across all venues. Constituents seek stable, consistent and equitable funding mechanisms for a long-term solution.

#### **What ideas or new approaches might make these priorities more possible for schools in your community?**

- Identify new revenue stream or partnerships designated for education
- Market education as an investment, make it a priority; build community and statewide support for education and educators
- Share more services among districts; consolidate districts; utilize more technology to share services and deliver instruction

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*“Make education an investment, not an expenditure.”*

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#### **Improve Perceptions and Invest in Education**

Educators perceive themselves as being undervalued and that education needs to be marketed as an investment in the future of South Dakota, rather than as a burden to society and taxpayers. All venues expressed a need to boost public perception about the value of education and its role in building strong communities and robust economies.