

Blue Ribbon Task Force Meeting Minutes

Meeting 2 – August 19, 2015

Ramkota Hotel, Pierre SD

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Funding Teachers and Students held its second meeting on August 17, 2015 at the Ramkota Hotel in Pierre. Task force members present were: Co-chair Sen. Deb Soholt, Co-chair Rep. Jacqueline Sly, Sen. Corey Brown, Sen. Troy Heinert, Sen. Billie Sutton, Sen. Craig Tieszen, Rep. Justin Cronin, Rep. Paul Hawks, Rep. Mark Mickelson, Rep. Steve Westra, Dr. Michael Rush, Dr. Melody Schopp, Tony Venhuizen, Jason Dilges, Dave Davis, Dr. Becky Guffin, LuAnn Lindskov, Dr. Brian Maher, DeLon Mork, Steven O'Brien, Jim Scull, Kevin Tetzlaff, and Erik Person. Excused were Beth Peitila, Eric Stroeder, and Vicki Harmdierks.

Representative Sly chaired the meeting, with the exception of session on “quantitative data update,” which was chaired by Senator Soholt.

Opening Comments

Rep. Sly gave brief opening remarks, encouraging members to keep the focus on education funding and reiterating the group’s overarching question, “what possibilities are there to meaningfully fund education for kids in our communities.”

The task force approved the agenda and the minutes from the July 7 meeting.

Rep. Sly introduced Rep. Steve Westra and Dr. Mike Rush, who were unable to attend the July meeting.

Quantitative Data Update

During the July meeting, Tami Darnall, Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Education presented quantitative data on current school funding. The August agenda was amended to allow for Darnall to address questions about financial data, geographic data and teacher salary data that had arisen at the July meeting. This presentation can be found here: <http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/Quantitative%20Follow-Up8-19.pdf>.

Qualitative Data Report

Dr. Julie Mathiesen, Executive Director of Technology and innovation in Education (TIE), presented the group with a qualitative report of compiled feedback on K-12 funding in South Dakota. The data that was gathered from feedback submitted to the Blue Ribbon Task force website and data collected in person at regional stakeholder meetings. The vast majority of the information was collected during the 18 statewide regional meetings TIE facilitated with educators, business leaders, and members of the public from across the state.

Dr. Mathiesen explained how feedback was collected. The regional meetings employed the World Café model. The format is a conversational process where participants are presented with a set of questions. The below questions were used to focus the conversation.

- When you think about funding in your local community, what is important to you?
- Now that you have identified what is important, what ideas or new approaches might make those ideas
- What advice do you offer to the task force

More information about the World Café method as well as the full report can be found here: http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/8-19%20-%20QualitativeDataReport_BlueRibbonSchoolFunding.pdf

Senator Sutton briefly shared a poll that was commissioned in June. The poll measured South Dakotans' attitudes about education funding, and indicated a belief that teacher salaries in South Dakota fall short of where they should be. Senator Sutton said he would share the interview schedule with the task force before the next meeting.

National, Regional and Local Teacher Supply and Demand

Dr. Richard Ingersoll, Professor of Education and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, gave a presentation titled "Why Schools Have Difficulty Staffing Their Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?" This presentation looked at national data. The full presentation can be found here:

<http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/Ingersoll%20Presentation819.pdf>

Dr. Ingersoll's overall point was that workforce shortages in teaching are attributable primarily to teachers leaving the profession. He recommended that a strategy to address a shortage focus on keeping teachers in the profession and reducing turnover, with efforts to increase new teachers as a secondary solution.

Dr. Melody Schopp, Secretary of Education, and Dr. Ingersoll addressed how South Dakota fits into Dr. Ingersoll's presentation. Dr. Schopp presented a few slides to facilitate that discussion, which can be found here:

<http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/SD%20Pipeline%20Data.pdf>.

The task force asked several questions, but concentrated specifically on comparing South Dakota turnover and other state-specific data to the national data in the Ingersoll presentation. The members also pointed out that South Dakota's teaching workforce is older than the rest of the country and a greater share would retire in the years to come. The task force also asked questions about degree production in the state and the in-migration of out of state teachers. The opinion was also expressed that, because South Dakota teacher salaries are relatively low, compensation may be a more significant factor for departing teachers in South Dakota than in the nation as a whole.

The presentation can be found here:

<http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/SD%20Pipeline%20Data.pdf>.

Innovation in South Dakota Schools – Practices and Possibilities

Dr. Melody Schopp opened this session by sharing a quote about education innovation in South Dakota:

It's virtually impossible to find all the teachers in all the subjects in all the places you need them in. This is especially true in remote parts of the state. Getting teachers to move to those locations is nigh to impossible. So now, schools in South Dakota can take classes like French or Calculus even if there isn't a teacher in those subjects to be found for hundreds of miles around.

The quote, from Gov. Bill Janklow, was included in a 2001 *Newsweek* article on education innovation in South Dakota. Dr. Schopp made the point that education innovation is an ongoing discussion; it can never be finished.

Presentations were given on E-learning and on Technology and Innovation in Education.

- Dr. James Smith, President of Northern State University and Mary Cundy, Principal at Statewide E-Learning shared on E-Learning opportunities available through NSU. Their presentation can be found here:
<http://blueribbon.sd.gov/docs/NSU%20Presentation%20on%20Distance%20Education%20and%20Innovation.pdf>
- Dr. Julie Mathieson, Executive Director of Technology in Education (TIE) South Dakota Innovation Laboratory. Her presentation can be found here:
https://prezi.com/gafatrqtcare/blueribbon_aug19/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy#.
- Dan Guericke, Executive Director of Mid-Central Co-op; Mari Biehl, Innovation Labs; and Dr. Jill Thorngren, Dean of SDSU College of Education & Human Sciences, presented on Innovation in Education. This presentation did not use slides, but audio is archived on the Blue Ribbon website.

Closing Comments

Individual task force members closed with comments outlining their thoughts from the first two meetings and hopes for the task force.

- Dr. Mike Rush
 - The data we have reviewed thus far is very similar to the data he had studied in Idaho in the past. The task force must address work environments and professional opportunities as well as pay.
- Sen. Corey Brown
 - In the feedback report, people asked that we be bold and think outside the box. None of us came here to make small tweaks. The distance education model could help us address both the teaching shortage and teacher salaries.

We should not be beholden to the old formula; we should be free to start from scratch. The new formula must incentivize innovation.

- Steven O'Brien
 - The revolving door for teachers is especially troubling. Salary is a part of the problem, but the solution must include mentoring and professional development. Our solutions must keep people for the long term, they must make sure that education is a lifetime career, not a short term occupation.
- Sen. Craig Tieszen
 - Our group will need to dispel a lot of common myths about education funding. This group has a tail wind and people expect us to do something.
- Jim Scull
 - We should make sure to go back to the teachers in our area and ask for their feedback. Many of us aren't educators and we should ask their opinion. We should be wary of solutions based on technology as it does not always solve problems or save money.
- Rep. Justin Cronin
 - Our education system and our teachers in SD are good. There is a huge disconnect between legislators and state funding and salaries. We should explore minimum salaries at a state level. Some schools have classes that are too small to be able to properly pay teachers. A one percent increase in sales tax raises \$200 million. We need to keep all options on the table.
- Tony Venhuizen
 - There are two main themes that I have heard thus far. The first is that it is a statewide challenge to have enough teachers and have quality teachers. Retaining the teachers we have is more important than recruiting new teachers. All of the solutions we have talked about require money. The second is how do we continue to provide education to very rural areas? Some of these areas will have difficult recruiting teachers not because of what they pay, but because of where they are.
- DeLon Mork
 - We should put the current funding formula in our rear-view mirror. We need to do something.
- Dr. Brian Maher
 - There are enough people out there to fill our teaching needs. We have to focus on quality, not just filling vacancies. We really need to focus on data from our region, not the entire country. Money matters for quality teachers.
- Dr. Becky Guffin
 - Co-chair Soholt has asked us to remain laser-focused and I agree. We need to answer how to meaningfully fund education. Innovation can be a distraction from our primary mission.
- Luann Lindskov
 - Legislators should spend time in classrooms of teachers from their districts. Teachers are innovating all over the state.

- Sen. Billie Sutton
 - We need to focus on SD and the states in our region; national data can be helpful, but we need to look at the specifics for our region.
- Erik Person
 - This task force needs to focus on what it can accomplish. Legislating innovation does not work. We are below a level on per student funding and teacher funding.
- Jason Dilges
 - The education system needs to change for the modern world; it is not the same as it was 25 years ago. Our funding formula needs to reflect that and we should start over from scratch.
- Kevin Tetzlaff
 - We should be focused on teacher retention. We need a stable and reliable funding source for our schools.

Full Meeting Materials

Please visit the Blue Ribbon Task-Force website to listen to an audio recording of the August meeting and access all meeting materials. <http://blueribbon.sd.gov/materials.aspx>.

Next meeting: September 9, 2015, held in Pierre, SD.