

Regional Listening Tour

What is Your Vision for New Hampshire Schools?

Note takers recorded stakeholder feedback during the NH Department of Education's Regional Listening Tour in **Gorham on November 7, 2016**. This document highlights the high-level summary and common themes from the meeting.

Student Success

- Empower our children to think – not just give right answers for accountability purposes.
- Help students develop better work study habits and work ethic – better prepare them for having the skills that local businesses are asking for from their employees.
- We need to reach kids earlier than kindergarten in order to make sure kids come to school ready and able to learn.
- Need to be putting more resources into early childhood (before age 5) – kids can't catch up.

School Characteristics

- All children need to be exposed to arts curriculum – not have it be a choice between the arts and gearing toward college curriculum.
- Provide opportunities for career exploration earlier in the student's schooling experience (middle school).
- Better integration of disciplines (like STEM and STEAM).
- Less emphasis on academic classroom based learning (reading/math) – more opportunities for kids (especially elementary) to “get out and get dirty.” More attention needed to different types of learning styles and ways of teaching.
- Instruction needs to be differentiated based on student ability (not grade or class). More personalized learning.
- Want to know what is expected of a student when he/she walks through the door of the school. What does student engagement look like in school?
- Build relationships with community to give students opportunities outside the classroom to try out trades or art based skills as well as job shadow, or have access to internships (for older students) to explore possible careers.

School and Teacher Success

- Teachers can't be successful with so many demands being put on their plates.
- Need to give teachers more autonomy to be practitioners who are able to assess student needs (diagnose) and make recommendations and implement them.
- Need to look at braided funding to have the resources to meet the needs of all kids.
- Need more opportunities for teachers to get professional development around personalized learning for students (hard to do in rural settings). Also teachers need to have the opportunity to try and take risks with their pedagogy and not have it held against them.
- Rural schools do not have equitable resources to meet the needs and demands they face – need to figure out how to fix this.
- Want to be able to compare schools based on where kids end up after graduation – what happens in terms of college and careers five years after a student has graduated high school?

Social Issues & Mental Health

- Need to be reaching out to parents early on (as soon as or even before child is born) to help them meet the developmental needs of their children so they can come to school ready and continue to be supported at home.
- Schools and teachers are dealing with so many social issues that teachers can't focus on teaching content. The issues are bigger than the education system – schools can't be social service agencies.
- Opioid crisis is getting bigger – will have serious effects on children (born to addicted parents) coming into school in the years ahead – we are not prepared to teach to kids who will come with those struggles.

- Seeing lots of mental health issues in kids at school (dealing with depression, anxiety, trauma) – overwhelming to teachers – not enough resources/choices available in the North Country to deal with this.

Statewide Issues

- Need the Department of Education to lead a collaborative effort to help network social services with schools so that kids can learn and grow academically.
- How do we bring our students back to our communities after they graduate? If community doesn't invest in and value education or provide opportunities and benefits that families need why would graduates stay or come back?
- The state should provide funding and building aid that is truly adequate and truly available, so that every district is able to provide the needed facilities and programs for their students, especially in small towns that do not have a large or deep tax base.
- The state should find a way to make it easier for cities and towns to work together more easily – to combine resources in a way that is beneficial to students. Currently, the structure of city government's oversight of school budgets is a barrier to efforts to combine forces.
- Statewide scheduling efforts around athletics need to also be considering things like bands and choruses – students shouldn't have to choose between a performance and a game.