

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 **Merrimack on November 10, 2016**. This document highlights the high-level summary and common themes from the meeting.

Student Success

- Need to give students opportunities to show lots of ways to demonstrate different types of learning.
- Want to know what are the higher education professionals experiencing with our students when they reach college – what do we need to be doing to better prepare them – need a conversation.
- Need to recognize that special needs students do not need to be “fixed,” but need to meet students where they are at and utilize and capitalize on the strengths they have. Fix the system not the students.

School Characteristics

- Want to see a school that has inclusive communities – in all aspects of school including extra-curricular.
- Want to see that students have a good understanding of science/STEM – looking for authentic real world science experiences. Want to see schools that really connect kids with the outdoors (research shows many positive effects for students).
- Concerned that recess time is being lost at the elementary schools – would like to know kids have that break during the day.
- Want to see that students have real technology opportunities (not just play with technology) – need to be competitive with the rest of the world.
- In comparing schools want to see if graduates are truly prepared – have they been able to find a job. Gather data on post-school outcomes for all students (special education and general).
- Want to know about the rigor, breadth and customization of curriculum. Want to know if the entire child is being developed – academics (including STEM), arts, and physical education – looking at mental and emotional health as well.
- Is the school looking at the specific needs of deaf students – understanding what their problems are – focusing on the student's learning process – knowing who is best to work with each student?
- Want to see that school spends time on helping children value each other and what it means to be a civic participant.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

- College students in teacher prep. programs need to spend more time in schools. They need to have more time being mentored by practicing educators.
- Teachers need more professional development for teaching science – look at Next Generation Science Standards so that students will get the depth of knowledge they need.
- Need to bring the colleges with teaching programs together with districts (at the Summer Summit?) to really talk about common goals and scaffold K-16 curriculum.
- Look at teacher preparation programs and how can they be embedded in K-12 schools.

School Success

- Concerned that the way we disaggregate data places blame of school failure on certain populations of students.
- Need to be looking at more qualitative data on students that really tells the story of success (for students and teachers) – use portfolios and rubrics – look at other ways to collect data on student learning.
- Using surveys of teachers and parents can help capture or demonstrate proof of effectiveness – look at how to show impact of teaching in more positive ways.

Social Issues & Mental Health

- Concern about rising mental health issues – making sure we have safe schools.
- Major concerns about the number of children being born to drug addicted parents – how will that affect the children when they enter school? Need to get prepared for the influx.
- Resources can't be siloed – need to have a single, centralized place for schools to reach out to get the information/support they need to help kids and families.
- Teachers are not experts in mental health issues - they need help in understanding what supports look like and how they are different for a 6 year old as compared to a 16 year old.

Statewide Issues

- In what ways can the state support tangible innovation? (technology)
- How can we change procedures (regulations) to help kids get services faster? Current methods/requirements delay and take away from timely delivery of services. We need to have other methods for making recommendations for students to receive services – teachers need to be more empowered to make decisions based on what they see happening with students – not just test data.
- Need to help families and communities better understand what assessments are for and what the benefits are of taking them – need better messaging.
- Stringency of requirements to receive funds is a barrier (i.e. – Title III funds – need to justify a lot in terms of work and progress for a relatively small amount of money – not worth the effort).
- Want to see a state plan that supports a well-rounded education for students – include elements of art, music, environmental education along with full breadth of academics – really think about the whole child and what really will make a well-rounded civic participant.
- How can the NH DOE and the legislature and businesses partner to help graduates from our k-12 schools who train to be teachers come back to New Hampshire and teach at schools and in districts that are struggling to get good teachers. (Look at developing a local version of Teach Across America).
- Want the NH DOE to provide guidance on where there is true flexibility for incorporating innovative practices in schools and what is non-negotiable – need a better understanding of what the parameters are in terms of both federal and state legislation.
- Want to examine and change the requirements around students being enrolled and participating in CTE programs – (Not requiring 2 years of academic high school before moving into the programs).