



DISCUSSION GUIDE



# 10 QUESTIONS

## TO ASK CANDIDATES & LAWMAKERS ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION

You play a critical role in shaping the future of public education in New Hampshire. Use this guide to have productive conversations about the most pressing issues facing the state.

### About This Resource

This discussion guide is intended to help Granite Staters ask candidates for office and elected officials where they stand on New Hampshire's most pressing public education issues.

This resource is provided by the **New Hampshire School Funding Fairness Project** and **Reaching Higher NH**, two nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations working to ensure a sustainable future for high-quality public education in New Hampshire. As 501(c)(3) organizations, we do not endorse candidates or make recommendations on how to vote.

### Start Here

Our public schools are among the best in the nation, serving over **85 percent of the state's students**. This is despite significant funding disparities between school districts, and increasingly polarizing state and national rhetoric.

- New Hampshire ranks 50th nationally for the state's share of funding for public schools, downshifting over **TWO BILLION** dollars annually to towns and cities.
- This downshifting forces local property taxes to fund 70% of public school costs, linking students' educational opportunities to local property values.
- NH's high school graduation rate is nearly 90%, but significantly lower for students experiencing poverty (73%), who have disabilities (73%), or are multilingual and learning English (69%).



Public schools are at the heart of our communities. New Hampshire's lawmakers are responsible for enacting laws that ensure every child has access to an adequate education, regardless of their zip code.



SCAN



LOOKING FOR  
DATA & TALKING  
POINTS?



## Conversation Starters

### THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What is the most important education issue facing our State today?

What policies do you think can address those issues?

What role do you think public schools play in the future success of New Hampshire and your community?

### TAXES

NH downshifts about \$2.7 billion annually in school funding onto property tax payers. **The result is widely varying tax rates. What do you think should be done to change this unfair tax system?**

### SCHOOL FUNDING

The State of New Hampshire contributes the smallest % toward public school funding in the country, resulting in local property taxpayers paying for about 70 cents of every dollar. **Do you think this is an appropriate split, and if not, how would you change it?**

### LAWSUITS

According to the recent ConVal lawsuit court decision and decades of independent studies, New Hampshire has been underfunding public schools by at least half a billion dollars every year, and likely much more, downshifting the cost to local property taxpayers. **How do you think the State Legislature should address this?**

### VOUCHERS

New Hampshire's school voucher program, named "education freedom accounts," gives parents taxpayer-funded savings accounts to use on private and religious school tuition and homeschooling expenses, and cost taxpayers \$25 million in 2023! **What is your position on this program? What research or evidence informs your position on school vouchers?**

### WORK-FORCE

New Hampshire is facing severe workforce shortages in education, from teachers and paraeducators to bus drivers. **How would you address these challenges?**

### SCHOOL CLIMATE

According to the NH Department of Education,<sup>29</sup> in 10 local families report their local public schools currently create an environment that helps their children learn. **What do you think the role of state lawmakers is to support that environment?**

### POST-GRAD

What policies do you think are important to ensure all of New Hampshire's graduates are college- and career-ready?

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