

GRANITE STATE TAXPAYERS

New Hampshire STRRT Charter

The School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce (STRRT) is being constituted to provide recommendations to the Governor, the Department of Education, and local school districts about the return to school as the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic subside.

Granite State Taxpayers Comments to STRRT regarding school reopening.

Granite State Taxpayers believes strongly that choice leads to higher quality and lower costs in the free market and in education. As such, we're gratified to see an unprecedented number of parents demanding to have a choice this fall as schools prepare to reopen. We view this as a sea change in the landscape that will only benefit both taxpayers and students.

As we consider what public education will look like in fall 2020, we see opportunities and threats on the horizon.

Distance learning is an enormous opportunity to increase the delivery and consumption of instruction. The improvement in delivery is obvious. There are logistical advantages in terms of time and resources required to deliver instruction. Decreasing the number of physical classrooms reduces overhead costs and increases flexibility and scalability. However, the increased efficiency in consuming instruction should not be ignored. Students are less constrained by classroom schedules and free to take more or less time as required to master the material. Taxpayers will benefit in the form of a more cost-effective education system and a more productive citizenry.

An opportunity is to assess the value of switching from traditional schools to online learning during the pandemic through assessment tests to determine the efficacy of the on-line programs employed, as well as characteristics and aptitudes of the students who preferred each system.

Another opportunity is more localized control over education. In Civil Disobedience, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "That government is best which governs least." We couldn't agree more and that's why we favor more localized government wherever possible. It does not get more local than a student's parents. Giving parents the freedom to make choices in the best interest of their child drives excellence and reduces bureaucratic overhead. The choice should not be limited to online or classroom. The answer for many families could be "both." Allowing parents to choose a hybrid model of distance and physical learning with some combination of public, private, charter, and home schooling will lead to the best outcomes for families and taxpayers alike.

GST also has some concerns about the school reopening process. We can envision a situation that results in the worst of both worlds; less efficiency and higher costs. If school districts simply "copy and paste" brick and mortar models to digital delivery, we will not see the results we otherwise could. All institutions, private and public, have inertia that obstructs change. The path of least resistance tends to be addition instead of renovation. This approach will not serve students or taxpayers well. And in the spirit of never letting a crisis go to waste, we see some school districts pushing to make permanent programs that were supposed to be temporary and/or increase the scope of their charter well beyond education.

The disruption to business and education in 2020 are unprecedented in modern history. As painful as these disruptions have been, they did us the favor of showing what is possible. GST hopes that the efforts and sacrifices of teachers and parents will lay a foundation for a better educational future for families and taxpayers alike.
