

## SCHOOL FINANCE WORKSHOPS

### **School Finance 101: Understanding the State Education Budget**

Recommended time: 1.5 – 2 hours

This workshop introduces participants to how the State contributes to education across school districts. We will begin by looking at “The State of the State,” and will continue by focusing on state and local education funding for the community we are working with, comparing funding for peer communities, and taking a look at demographic trends.

### **Understanding the Local Education Budget**

Recommended time: 1 – 1.5 hours

This workshop is designed to prepare you for budget season. It is meant to help community members better understand what “the budget” means. Where do I find our budget? How long is the budget? How detailed? What can I easily take away from it? What is difficult to find in the budget? How do I ask questions about the budget and who do I ask? We will take a look at some of the documents that we can find online so participants can become comfortable participating in the local education budget discussion.

Please note the Connecticut School Finance Project DOES NOT:

#### ***Weigh In on Local School Finance Issues & Policies***

While we believe municipalities play an important role in the school finance system and have an obligation to appropriately (while considering the town’s wealth and needs) contribute funds to the education of their school-age children, we do not work on local school finance issues or policies, including, but not limited to:

- How much an individual municipality contributes to its local public school district
- Property tax rates for individual municipalities
- How districts distribute funds among their schools
- How districts spend their funds (including district contracts and administrator, teacher, and staff pay)

#### ***Support and/or Endorse Local Initiatives***

As an organization focused solely on statewide school finance issues and policies, we do not support and/or endorse any local initiatives.

### **Building Relationships**

Recommended time: 1 hour

This workshop is intended to get participants comfortable building relationships with decision-makers in the realm of school finance, on both a state and local level. We will talk about roles (not specific individuals) and the function of the different roles. Does a legislative aide matter? Can you ask to speak with or meet with a local board of education member? How do you build relationships, and who do you build them with?

## **Email and Letter Writing to Include Your Story**

Recommended time: 1 – 1.5 hours

What does an effective email or letter look like? What needs to be included and what should be excluded? Do you make your letters personal or are you a “just the facts” kind of person? In order to communicate effectively and ask decision-makers to support a particular point of view, you need to strike a balance of both. Plan on sharing your passion and your story!

## **Preparing for Testimony**

Recommended time: 1 – 1.5 hours

Getting up in front of people and speaking can be intimidating. Trying to express your perspective on an issue in front of strangers can add to that. This workshop is getting you ready to speak up and speak out in three minutes in an effective way.

## **Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor**

Recommended time: 1 hour

Want to write a letter to the editor but don't know how? Have you seen op-eds in the paper but feel they have never addressed your concern or perspective? We are going to explore what the purpose of these types of writing are, and what the ground rules are for getting them done.

## **State Finance 101**

Recommended time: 1 hour

Wondering what the state of the State is? Curious as to how the headlines may impact your community, particularly education funding? In this workshop, we will explore Connecticut's fiscal state and what the path to getting to this point was and what the future looks like. This workshop is general in nature, focused on the overall picture of Connecticut's fiscal health, rather than the details of departmental or program budgets or even municipal funding.

## **Data Walk**

Recommended time: 1.5 hours

When someone starts talking about data, do you feel overwhelmed? You are not the only one! Let's go for a walk – a data walk! Data walks are intended to help people get to know their community better while interacting with the data that tells the story of the community. Working in small groups, participants in this workshop move through data stations to better understand how data can appear, what it does and does not tell you, and how to interact with data. This workshop is intended to help anyone who feels “stuck” when people talk data, as well as those who are comfortable but would like to better understand how to use data to support their story.