

NH SCHOOL

# Funding Fairness Project

# STORY TELLING WORKBOOK

Personal stories are the most powerful tool in shaping public policy and changing the minds of those who have the power to make meaningful change to New Hampshire's school funding model. When the same experiences are shared from people experiencing the same problems over and over all over the state, the need for systemic change is difficult to ignore. From your property taxes being too high to your own child not being able to receive the services they need: your voice is valuable and your story makes a difference. No policy expertise is necessary to make a difference telling your story... you are an expert in your own experience.

## BUILDING YOUR STORY: KEY COMPONENTS

### 1. WHO ARE YOU?

#### I AM A:

Parent, Grandparent, Student, Teacher,  
Business Owner, Taxpayer, Renter, School  
Board Member, Municipal Elected Official,  
School Administrator, Support Staff, Graduate  
of NH Public Schools

### 2. CONTEXT

Time, Location, Community

*Example: this year at public schools in  
Somersworth OR tax season 2022 in Deerfield*

### 3. YOUR CHALLENGES

**What have you been challenged by? Are there villains in this story? Who or what are they?** High Property Taxes, lack of AP classes, businesses leaving, lack of special education resources, lack of extra circulars, low teacher salaries, deteriorating facilities

### 4. YOUR OUTCOMES

#### **What is the result of your challenges?**

How has your life been impacted, and how could it have looked different if the system were more equitable? What would it have meant for you, your child, your classroom or your business?

My life is...

My community is...

My tax bill is...

My education is...

### 5. CALL TO ACTION

**What needs to change? What is the action you are asking for, and who are you asking?**

Our students deserve...

My family needs...

The legislature must...

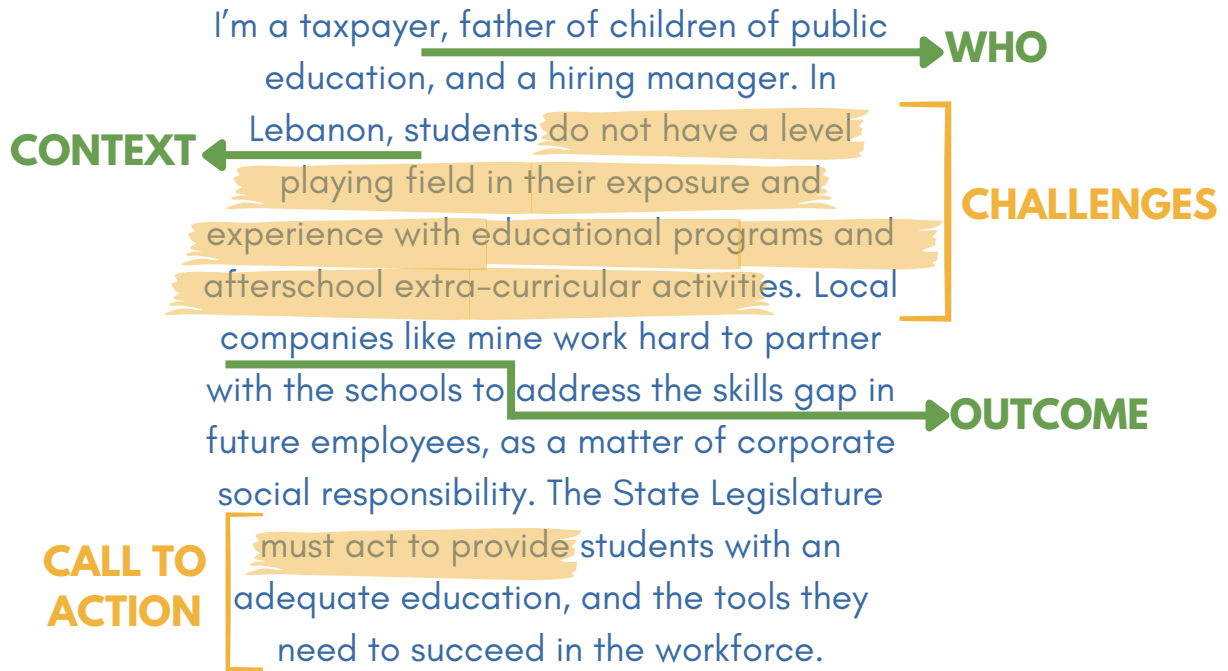
Our schools need...

My community will benefit from...

# EXAMPLES

Everyone’s stories are unique. Your story will be different than these examples, but identifying pieces of these that you resonate with may help you in crafting your own. All perspectives are helpful in shaping policy decisions and finding the right solution.

**#1**



**#2** Our rural town pours everything into our schools at its own cost. We had to complete a high school renovation and took our time to make sure it was a fair deal for the students and the towns. But the state pulled building aid out from underneath us and we had to take a \$20 million bond alone with no state help. We are bearing the brunt of this cost in our property taxes, and will for 20 more years. The State’s neglect to address this issue is unconstitutional, and comes at the expense of our taxpayers and our students. The legislature must increase funding for our public schools and create an equitable system.

**#3** We moved to Concord before my son’s Sophomore year of High School. He was previously enrolled in Manchester’s public schools. He has needed special education supports throughout his education. The opportunities and resources available to him in Concord were light years ahead of Manchester. He was able to succeed in a technology course which put him on a path to the local community college, an associate’s degree, and full employment and the ability to be self-sufficient. The disparity in public education from town to town is extremely unfair to students. The State needs to address this issue to ensure all students are given the opportunity to succeed-- not just the ones in the wealthiest towns.

## HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Why do you think well-funded public schools are important for your community?
- How has school funding impacted your family? How was your child's education? Do you think they had access to all of the resources they needed to succeed?
- What do students in your school lack that other schools may have access to?
- Have your property taxes gone up in recent years to make up for the lack of funding provided by the State? Has this made your life financially difficult? Have you worried about being able to afford them?
- Are you a teacher or school administrator? How does funding impact your classroom and your students? What would you be able to provide your students if there were more funding from the state for your school?
- Do you have a student that requires special resources that public schools do not provide?
- Have you witnessed firsthand the disparities in public education from town to town?
- Are you a business owner? Did you pick where to open your business based on the property tax rates? Do you struggle with attracting a qualified workforce? What connections do you see to a qualified workforce and the public schools in your area?
- Have you ever held elected office? What was the process like balancing support for your local schools and the ability of local residents to pay their property taxes? How would that dynamic be better if the state provided more funding for schools?



# BUILD YOUR STORY

## 1. WHO ARE YOU?

PARENT

EDUCATOR

TAXPAYER

ACTIVIST

ELECTED

## 2. CONTEXT

SCHOOL

TOWN

TIME

EVENT

## 3. YOUR CHALLENGES

ECONOMIC IMPACT

OPPORTUNITY LOSS

HIGH TAX BILL

## 4. YOUR OUTCOMES

MY \_\_\_\_ IS \_\_\_\_

I AM \_\_\_\_

## 5. CALL TO ACTION

LEADERS MUST

POLICY CHANGE

WE NEED