

Public Education Funding Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2025

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

The Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC) meeting was held on August 11, 2025, with the following members in attendance:

Cindy Marten, Ruth Ann Miller, Ann Visalli, Laura Sturgeon, Kim Williams, Eric Buckson, Taylor Hawk, Tammy Croce, Kevin Long, David Tull, Jason Hale, Emily Falcon, Nick Johnson, Rachel Valentin, Jose, Aviles Rivera, Evelyn Edney, April Albury-Harmon, Karen Ewing, Heather Hitchens, Sarah Celestin, Helen Anderson, Jennifer Fuqua, Britney Mumford, Gary Henry, Madeleine Bayard, Meedra Surratte, Marcus Wright, Lisa Lawson, Tyler Gunter

Also participating were Sarah Barzee, WestEd, and Michael Griffith, Learning Policy Institute (LPI).

[Audio Recording of Meeting](#)

Welcome/Introductions

Chair Sturgeon opened the meeting and invited Anna Sullivan (WestEd) to conduct a verbal roll call. A quorum was confirmed and the meeting was officially called to order. She welcomed Tyler Gunter, who is replacing Sage Sawhney, as a new commission member.

Approval of June 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting. Marcus Wright motioned to approve and Helen Anderson seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

New Business

The Chair opened the meeting by stating four meeting objectives:

To ensure Commission members:

1. Understand the differences in local tax revenues and how this will apply to the new school funding framework PEFC develops
2. Understand that the new school funding framework will allocate more state funds to those districts with less ability to generate local tax revenue.
3. Understand how other states have addressed property wealth disparities in their funding framework.
4. Understand the local Delaware context relative to property wealth disparities and equalization.

The Chair then introduced Mike Griffith from LPI.

Griffith provided a national-level overview of school funding equalization, highlighting key concepts and models used in states across the country, and the rationale for each, to ensure equitable education funding.

Two main equalization models were outlined. Delaware currently uses a line-item model, where equalization funding is a separate payment added to the formula. While easier to manage, this approach often falls short in addressing funding gaps. In contrast, the formula-embedded model, used

in states like Colorado, builds equalization into the funding formula itself. This system calculates total funding needs, subtract the mandated local contribution, and provide the remainder through state aid. Though more equitable, this model requires a full overhaul of the existing funding structure and is more difficult to implement. Griffith noted that while embedded models provide stronger equalization, they require significant structural change.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding equity, Griffith further clarified that both district wealth and student need must be addressed, and stated that effective funding formulas do both:

- Ensure lower-wealth districts receive sufficient state-level funding through equalization.
- Direct additional resources to students with higher needs, regardless of district wealth.

The Chair then introduced Emily Falcon to present the Delaware context.

Falcon provided an overview of Delaware's current equalization funding formula, including its historical context, current structure, and the implications of property reassessments. She also addressed participant questions regarding effort, local share expectations, and how equalization funds are applied in practice.

Key Points included:

- **Historical Context:**
 - Delaware's equalization formula was frozen in FY2009 due to outdated property assessments and rising discrepancies in district wealth.
 - Before the freeze, the state attempted to compensate with smoothing mechanisms, caps, and hold harmless provisions.
- **Formula Components:**
 - The "authorized amount" (set at \$29,650 since 2006) represents what a district is expected to have available locally to support education.
 - The formula factors in:
 - *Ability*: a district's property wealth
 - *Effort*: how much of that wealth is taxed (based on current expense revenue relative to tax base)
 - *Equalization funding*: fills the gap if a district is at full effort but still falls short of the authorized amount
- **Impact of Reassessment:**
 - Outdated assessments led to "paper wealth" that couldn't be taxed, skewing the formula.
 - Recent reassessments offer more accurate data, creating an opportunity to reactivate or redesign the formula.
- **Post-Freeze Conditions:**
 - Though the formula was frozen, equalization dollars have still been allocated based on changes in units (student enrollment).
 - Per-unit funding disparities remain wide (e.g., Cape Henlopen receives ~\$1,200/unit, Lake Forest ~\$21,000/unit).
- **Charter Schools:**
 - Receive equalization funds based on the weighted average of students' home districts.

Following the presentation, Commission members were invited to ask questions and share their perspectives. An open discussion followed.

Public Comment

The commission heard public comment from Pam Weir, Kendall Massett, and Sherry Long.

Adjournment

Senator Sturgeon noted that the commission would reconvene on September 8, 2025 from 4:00-6:00 virtually. Marcus Wright moved to adjourn, and Tyler Gunter seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anna Sullivan for WestEd

Updated on 08.15.2025