



Proposed Group Agreements for the NH Commission to Study School Funding

Recognizing that NH General Court rules and norms are the primary guide for conducting effective and fair deliberations, we propose that the Commission adopt a set of group agreements that can both assure trust in the process and model civil, productive dialogue for others. We offer these with the understanding that Commission meetings are essentially work sessions made up of presentations by experts as well as deliberations among Commission members and in the future with stakeholders and the general public. Thus, a set of norms different from the kind that apply in a legislative hearing will be useful.

We suggest these group agreements be adopted by the Commission and used both during its meetings at the LOB and in other public engagement activities sponsored by the Commission.

- Listen first
- Be open-minded
- It's okay to disagree, but don't personalize it. Focus on the idea, not the person. If you disagree, consider asking a question rather than arguing to prove your point.
- Accept working through conflict to its resolution as a catalyst for learning
- It's okay to put issues like race and class on the table.
- Be purposeful and to the point. Notice if what you are conveying is or is not pertinent to the topic at hand.
- Take risks, be raggedy, make some mistakes – then let go
- We all share responsibility for making the group productive.

SAMPLE AGREEMENTSⁱ

NH LISTENS GROUP AGREEMENTS

- Share airtime so everyone gets a chance to be heard.
- Be respectful and use respectful language.
- If you disagree, consider asking a question rather than arguing to prove your point.
- It's okay to disagree, but don't personalize it. Focus on the idea, not the person.
- Speak up if the process doesn't seem fair.
- Personal stories stay in the group unless we all agree we can share them.
- If you talk about people who are not here, don't use their names.
- Speak for yourself. Don't try to speak for "your group."
- It's okay to put issues like race and class on the table.
- We all share responsibility for making the group productive.
- Listen to each other.

CONVERSATION AGREEMENTSⁱⁱ

- **Be curious and open to learning.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. Enjoy hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration.
- **Show respect.** Look for a common ground you can agree on and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak authentically from your personal experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Notice if what you are conveying is or is not pertinent to the topic at hand.
- **Speak from your own experience.** Use "I" statements. Your experience is never wrong; neither is anyone else's.
- **Leave time for questions or clarifications.**

LEARNING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- Be fully present
- Be self-responsible and self-challenging
- Listen, listen, listen and respond
- Lean into discomfort
- Take risks, be raggedy, make some mistakes – then let go
- Accept working through conflict to its resolution as a catalyst for learning
- Be open-minded
- Take note of your learnings and reflections – use your journals
- Treat the openness and honesty of others as a gift: honor confidentiality

ⁱ Also see <https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/featured-resources/developing-community-agreements>

ⁱⁱ From: https://www.livingroomconversations.org/conversation_agreements/