



BUDGET FORUMS 2008



Budget Forum #4 April 3, 2008

SUMMARY

Participants were asked at the beginning of Forum #4 to keep the following questions in mind during the presentation and were then given an opportunity to give their feedback after all information had been presented, during group discussions. Comments are summarized as follows:

1. **How does the proposed budget address the Board Goals, Strategic Plan and the input received from previous forums?**

- Addresses Board Goals well.
- Impressed at the low costs of transportation.
- Concerned about Speech Language Pathologists going onto the second priority rather than the first, especially with regard to Goal #4.
- Need more work/support if we are going to reach grade level expectations by Grade 4. A HUGE disconnect between that goal and the strategies that are being funded, especially the Speech Language Pathologists and Literacy Specialist.
- The money is more effective if we equip more people to have expertise, rather than hiring just one.
- Reasonably well and clear.
- Lots of funds around early learning (early support).
- Seems fair.
- 2 district positions are new – not reflected in forum discussions.
- Funds seem targeted at low-risk kids. Need more attention or communication to gifted/enrichment programs too.
- How are we addressing the matter of efficiencies?
- “Dot” activity was hasty – not enough thought into choice and concerned about the weighting.
- Disappointed that although we heard that parents need to be included, this wasn’t reflected in what was presented. We need more Strong Starts; more Read n’ Rec – these get parents into schools.
- \$177,000 for Early Learning is spread among all our schools!
- Our staff are asking for more money to cover benefits – the money is not reaching our kids.
- We are pulling our teachers out of classrooms to support tech.

- School cell phones budgets – not clear.
- Are we doing our best?
- TA's – shouldn't that be more of a priority for further discussion.

2. How did today's presentation and previous forums help you to gain an understanding of how the district supports student learning?

- Gained a lot of information about how the district allocates funds and all the initiatives and programs.
- Pretty good distribution of funds across the goals.
- Can see it addresses Board Goals well.
- It helped give a more "detailed window".
- Clearer picture of how the "pie" is sliced.
- Question why the HR person is on the first level – didn't emerge as a priority at the forum - we need a percentage breakdown from the third forum.
- Common thread – serves kids.
- Like detailed breakdown, eg. early learning stuff.
- It is difficult to see the match, specifically to see Board Goals.
- 3 themes – Early/Primary, Social Responsibility and Graduation.
- Forums provided a good understanding of budget process.
- Good educational experience for participants.
- System accountability – report results of budget decisions.

3. In what ways could the Budget Forum process be improved for the future?

- The messaging was much better this year - the welcome was obvious.
- Provide the percentage breakdown from Forum #3 of how people allocated their "dots".
- Huge improvement over last year.
- Seeing numbers early is very good.
- Some early discussions may have benefited from attaching some perspective to them.
- Encourage more people to attend.
- Gives us a global perspective on District.
- In our worlds most of us deal with a small piece.
- Link between elementary, middle and secondary.
- Time management was effective.
- Get the information to participants before hand. After the first sign-up ask people to indicate whether they wish information ahead of time.
- 3:30 – 5:30 pm time – could be altered.
- It was reaffirming that ideas that were discussed were identified.
- Liked the interactive approach to the forums.

- It's a concern that there appears to be little flexibility in the budget.
- What are the fixed \$\$ and what is discretionary \$\$.
- Would like to see a comparison of costs over time.
- How/who determines the cost of things.
- Concern that only forum participants have influence.
- Activities provided good information but only from one table.
- 4 sessions worked well.
- Advertising was good.
- Need to continue to encourage attendance.
- Good to see that input actually influenced where the \$\$ went.
- Would like to see regular updates – accountability.
- Forum #4 was good but we need time to absorb the information.
- Transparent process.
- Linear process.
- The themes are representative of forum input.