

Summary of budget survey responses from 12.21.07 through 1.16.08 Boundaries & Closings

Balance Demographics

Those responding recommended that both boundary changes and school closings address the issues of balance and equity. Balance was applied to race, economics, academic achievement, and geography. Many responses stated that this is an opportunity to desegregate and to no longer avoid this issue by employing other methods such as magnet schools. This had a positive intention: Desegregation will lead to better, equitable educational opportunities and will aid in closing the achievement gap. Many of the responses also addressed the real or perceived east and west geographic division of the district. Recommendations referencing east-west included 1) redrawing attendance areas in a north-south pattern 2) closing two west elementary schools to balance the previous closing of two east elementary schools 3) balance by closing one east and one west elementary.

Cost to Operate

When addressing site closings, many responders took a pragmatic approach and considered several measurable facts. Building age was specifically mentioned with the assumption that older buildings will need to be renovated sooner than newer buildings; therefore, permanently closing older building would save money. Proximity of sites to each other was frequently noted with the premise that a merger of two staffs, services, and student enrollments would eliminate the need for one or more buildings. This idea was also paired with an assumption that it is more expensive to operate smaller schools, concluding that the smallest schools should be closed and students assigned to larger buildings. Several responses recommended maximizing space by enrolling as many students as a building will accommodate, and closing or repurposing the remaining buildings. Repurposing buildings and then relocating specific programs to those buildings was seen as a practical way to eliminate the need to lease spaces such as the enrollment center or OSTC.

Neighborhood Schools

Frequent recommendations were made to (re)establish the neighborhood school. This was seen as a valuable means to create community support, to provide important social interaction, and to help ensure the security and safety of children. In addition, establishing attendance boundaries based on neighborhoods was viewed as a way to reduce the need and cost of student transportation.

Bussing

Reducing student transportation was frequently noted as a preferred way to reduce costs. Specific recommendations included extreme measures of eliminating all transportation, providing only fee-based transportation, and eliminating special forms of transportation. A more common recommendation was made to increase the distance for walkers and to enroll students in the schools closest to their residences.

Reconfigure Grade Bands & School Week

Suggestions were made to reorganize buildings by reconfiguring the grades as a cost saving measure. This was seen as a way to merge and centralize staff and services, and to reduce the number of open buildings. Various models of reconfiguration included the following: kindergarten center; 1-5; K-2; 3-5; 6-8 middle schools; grade 9 center; 9-12 high schools.

A related suggestion was to reorganize the school week by reducing the number of days to four per week and extending the hours of daily student contact to meet state requirements.

Closing Specific Buildings

Comments included the names of buildings to be considered for permanent closing or closing with the intent to repurpose. The elementary schools frequently noted were Osseo, Fair Oaks, Rice Lake, Cedar Island, Oak View, Edgewood, and Birch Grove. Suggestions were made to combine Cedar Island and Oak View and then close one of the two sites. Suggestions to close Edgewood and Birch Grove were made with a recommendation to move the magnet programs to larger buildings. Secondary schools suggested for closing were North View and Park Center and included unsupported statements regarding the success of the MYP/IB program and student behavior. In addition it was suggested that the Osseo Area Learning Center building be closed and the program moved to one of the other secondary sites.

Academic Performance

In the process of closing elementary schools, it was suggested that consideration be given to academic achievement and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools with the lowest performance, widest achievement gap, or weakest AYP should be closed. Closing these schools would necessitate that students be reassigned to more successful schools. This was perceived as an opportunity to provide equity because it would give lower achieving students access to better resources, better learning opportunities, and a more positive environment.

Magnet Schools

Support was expressed for expanding the two elementary magnet schools (EW & BG). This included moving the programs to larger buildings and maximizing enrollment to increase participation.

Open Enrollment

Those opposed see open enrollment as negating changes made by redrawing attendance boundaries. Those in favor of maintaining open enrollment see it as a compromise to changing the boundaries; parents who do not like their attendance area can opt to open enroll their children in a different school.

Levy Voting Results

Repurposing or closing schools could be based on the voting results for a specific area. Those attendance areas which supported the levy should feel the least impact from budget reductions, school closures, etc.

Communications

Respondents asserted that the impact of the failed levy questions was not well communicated. There was uncertainty and confusion as to what each levy question meant and the how the passage or failure of the levy would play out across the district.

Words of Wisdom

There was recognition of the complexity of the budget problems and district experts will make thoughtful, well-informed decisions based on facts and not on political influence or parental pressure.

Summary of budget survey responses from 12.21.07 through 1.11.08 Staff, Program and Service Reductions

Teaching Staff

Overall, responses called for retaining teaching positions. Teachers were defined as licensed teachers who work directly with students and who provide ongoing instruction in the mainstream classroom. It was stated that staffing cuts/reductions should happen as far away from students as possible. Class size should not be increased because it directly affects the quality of student learning.

One frequent, specific suggestion about teachers and cost reduction was to offer retirement incentives.

Non-teaching Staff

Suggestions to reduce licensed staff focused on those not working in the classroom. These included eliminating elementary counselors and social workers because they are already spread too thin and their services can be obtained through outside sources. Library media specialists (LMS) should work in two sites or be eliminated, and the position of instructional coaches should be eliminated. The number of special education supervisors should be reduced, and the case load of every special education teacher should be significantly increased resulting in the need for fewer special education teachers.

Non-licensed Staff

It was recommended that the positions of cultural liaison/student advocate be eliminated, and the number of educational support professionals (ESPs) be greatly reduced.

Building Administrative Staff

For elementary schools the recommendation was to eliminate all behavior intervention positions (BITS) and to assign principals two sites. The recommendation for secondary schools was to significantly reduce the number of assistant principals and/or administrative assistants. Any compensatory funds used to hire building level administrators should then be used to retain classroom teachers. Responses also recommended that cuts be made at equal percentages; if 10% of teachers are cut, then 10% of administrators are cut.

Educational Service Center Staff

Responses included comments that the reduction of staff should begin at the district level and should begin with reducing the number of assistant superintendents and the human resources staff. The positions of curriculum specialist should be eliminated, combined, or rotated on a needs basis. It was also noted that no new positions should be added to the ESC and that consultants should no longer be hired by the district.

Programs

Overall, responses stated that the focus of education should be academics in the mainstream classroom. With that in mind, there were also broad statements that included reducing and/or eliminating all extra curricular activities. Athletics was the most common topic and the recommendations included raising fees, eliminating all athletics, eliminating any sport that cannot fund itself, and letting the local parks and recreation programs take full responsibility for athletics. Music was also singled out as program that could be completely eliminated or significantly reduced by limiting the elementary offerings. The talented and gifted program (TAG) was viewed by many as an extra service provided only to selected student and should be eliminated. Others took the opposite view and offered testimony of TAG's significance in education.

The recommendation was made that all professional development requiring travel outside the district be eliminated, and that no food or beverage be provided at ESC meetings.

Services

It was recommended that food services be reduced or out-sourced. Reducing the use of paper was also recommended. Costs could be lowered by eliminating all mailings and fliers, and by reducing copying done for classrooms. Communications should be through electronic means.

Communications

In reviewing the survey submissions, it was evident that some responders do not understand the complexity of funding sources.

Words of Wisdom

A response stated that cuts should not be hidden by increasing class size; they should be made in places that are most visible to the public and have the least impact on the mainstream classroom.

Several responses reminded that decisions to cut, reduce and retain should be based on the district's strategic plan.

Zoomerang Survey Results

ISD 279 Strategic Plan Budgeting

Survey

Response Status: Completes

Filter: No filter applied

Jan 14, 2008 6:35 AM PST

Thank you for your participation in the
ISD 279 Strategic Plan Budgeting Survey.

1. Demographic Information:

City of Residence:

Brooklyn Center	6	1%
Brooklyn Park	93	21%
Maple Grove	139	31%
Osseo	13	3%
Plymouth	23	5%
Corcoran	7	2%
Dayton	3	1%
Hassan	3	1%
Other	160	36%
Total	447	100%

2. Age Group:

18 - 24	12	3%
25 - 34	78	17%
35 - 44	97	22%
45 - 54	171	38%
55 - 64	88	20%
65 and older	1	0%
Total	447	100%

3. Gender:

Male	102	23%
Female	345	77%
Total	447	100%

Please share your ideas for Strategic Plan Budgeting in the following two categories:

4. Boundaries and School Closings

(Limit 3500 characters)

367 Responses

5. Staff, Program, and Service Reductions

(Limit 3500 characters)

392 Responses