



STATEMENTS OF RECOMMENDATION DECEMBER 8, 2014

INTRODUCTION

General Agreement: Serving as the basis of the following Statements of Recommendation is the general agreement among *34Next* participants and the Facilitating Team regarding what they believe to be key areas in need of review by the Glenview District 34 Board of Education. Also included in this statement are the points of celebrations, surprises and concerns, which we feel help underscore the values and priorities of our local community and should be used to further inform the Board as it decides the best course of action to address each of the five recommendations.

BACKGROUND ON *34NEXT*: COMMUNITY VIEWS ON GLENVIEW 34 SCHOOLS

34Next: Community Views on Glenview 34 Schools was a collaborative effort between District 34 and a group of local residents that first launched in September. The purpose of this extensive community engagement program was for District 34 leadership to gain a deeper understanding of the community's values and help further shape the District's priorities for the future. Some key highlights include:

- Sessions were held at 7 pm on September 10, October 2, October 21, and November 5 at Attea Middle School
- 232 = total attendance at four sessions; 123= total number of unique participants
- Special mailers were produced, translated into Korean and Spanish, and sent community wide, inviting participation prior to each session
- Website dedicated to *34Next* was launched, housing all important information and materials relating to each session
- Facebook and Twitter accounts were launched to enhance communication efforts
- District newsletters (printed and electronic) were distributed community-wide to provide coverage of *34Next*
- Extensive media coverage of *34Next* launch and of all four sessions was provided by all local outlets (Chicago Tribune, Glenview Lantern, Glenview Journal, Pioneer Press)

BOARD CHARGE TO 34NEXT

“Develop recommendations to help identify for the Board of Education the highest priorities (strategies, programs, initiatives) that our community believes will lead to the achievement of our Strategic Plan, which centers around teaching and learning for our students.”

GOALS OF 34NEXT

- To provide information to the community in order to assist with understanding around the strategic direction of the system
- To provide information to the community to strengthen understanding of the resources available to the District and knowledge around the programs currently in place
- To better understand the community’s priorities as the District works toward achievement of the strategic plan
- To identify potential partnerships with District 34 stakeholders in the areas of time, talent, and donations (in kind/monetary)
- To provide feedback on the frequency and format of future community engagement efforts
- For the administration to apply the knowledge gained from this community engagement to inform future engagement efforts

1. CELEBRATIONS

General Agreement: Glenview *34Next* participants strongly believe in the type of educational experience currently provided to all students, and at the root of this effort are District 34 teachers and principals who are passionate and dedicated to their schools. Parents believe in the “Smart with Heart” educational approach, which supports the idea that student success is measured not only by academic success but also by the social-emotional growth of a child. Knowing that District 34 was able to achieve and continually maintain this type of reputation while being fiscally responsible was a particular source of pride among participants. Additionally, we celebrate as a community the diversity present in all District 34 schools.

- ❖ High Academic Performance
- ❖ Substantial Community Partnerships
- ❖ Holistic Educational Approach
- ❖ Quality Educational Staff
- ❖ Solid Financial Management
- ❖ Progressive Technology
- ❖ District 34 Diversity

2. SURPRISES

General Agreement: *34Next* participants were surprised to learn about several factors present in District 34, most notably being the low cost per pupil (\$12,747, according to 2012-13 data) in relation to comparable districts and how this cost is actually decreasing. Other surprises include there being more than 40 languages spoken in the homes of District 34 students and that our enrollment history is expected to plateau and eventually decline in the next few years. In relation to finances, the expense of reducing class sizes was frequently noted, as well as the small amount of federal funding (4%) collected by the District.

- ❖ Low Cost Per Pupil
- ❖ Diversity Present in D34
- ❖ Cost of Changing Class Sizes
- ❖ Enrollment History and Projections
- ❖ District Funding Resources

3. CONCERNS

General Agreement: The biggest concern that continued to surface at all four sessions by 34Next participants was District 34's current class size. Many were in agreement that current class size is too high; however, at a minimum, it should not be increased beyond current numbers. Full-day kindergarten also was frequently referenced, with many in agreement this should be studied. In regards to technology, although this was also a source of celebration, there was concern that it was being used too frequently or in place of important tools such as pen and paper. The following were also mentioned: how often we are testing and the stress it can cause students, protecting current programming, and the impact of legislation like Senate Bill 16 on District 34 funding.

- ❖ Changes in Class Size
- ❖ Overreliance on Technology
- ❖ Status of Full-day Kindergarten
- ❖ Use of Assessments/Testing
- ❖ Loss of Balanced Programming
- ❖ External Impacts on Funding

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations represent a blend of common feedback heard from session participants as well as observations made by the Facilitating Team. It should be noted that these recommendations are not listed in priority order.

1. Develop an effective model of communication on potential program changes that clearly explains the educational and financial impacts. The Board must work to confirm the community's understanding. This type of high-level communication should be proactive in nature, allowing time for the community to respond appropriately, and be translated into other languages. Examples of when this model of communication would be used include: explaining the financial impacts of lowering class size, highlighting changes in technology, or providing information on pending legislation that would have a significant impact on District finances.
2. Strengthen the school community's understanding of the District's strategic plan, and how testing and assessment support that plan. This is especially important given that the landscape of testing and assessments is changing, and we need to ensure there is a balance with other measurements relating to Whole Child Education. There should also be an emphasis on providing information on when testing will take place, the purpose and value of each test, and how the test results will be utilized.
3. Conduct an extensive study on the educational need/value and feasibility of full-day kindergarten. The study should look into the educational value of full-day kindergarten and facility constraints and include a comprehensive cost/benefit

analysis.

4. Share a comprehensive understanding of the District's philosophy regarding the use of technology in the educational process with the school community. Continue providing proper instructional technology support to the staff through professional development.
5. Continue celebrating the diversity of the D34 community through measures meant to reach, communicate with, and engage all populations.