



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
AS A RESULT OF THE  
SMALL GROUP WORK ACTIVITY  
**SESSION #1 • SEPTEMBER 10, 2014**

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**TASK #1: CELEBRATE • SURPRISE • CONCERN**

**CELEBRATE**

Take some time to discuss with members of your group about what District 34 is doing right - what the District is doing "well"—to educate District 34 students. Maybe think of it in terms of completing this statement: "We are proud of our District because \_\_\_\_\_."

**BIGGEST SURPRISE**

Based on the information provided in the presentation, what was the greatest surprise for your group?

**GREATEST CONCERN**

Based on the information provided in the presentation, what concerned your group the most?

**TASK #2: QUESTIONS • EXPECTATIONS**

Given these changes to our District and our strategic plan goals, what questions or expectations do you have about the direction Glenview District 34 is heading for improving students' life and learning opportunities?

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The estimated number of participants at the September 10, 2014 CES-1 was approximately one hundred. However, Facilitating Team members, Board of Education members and some District administrators are not asked to sign-in.

After hearing an in depth presentation by Superintendent Michael Nicholson entitled "D34: Past • Present • Future" (see the PowerPoint on the 34Next website) participants worked in 16 small groups (approximately 6 participants per group) to complete the two tasks listed above. Following is a summary of the response from the groups.

**TASK #1: CELEBRATE • SURPRISE • CONCERN**

**CELEBRATE**

Participants at the first 34Next community engagement session identified several items they believed are sources of pride for Glenview District 34. Participants were proud of the **academic performance** levels of District 34 students in comparison to the national averages and other local school districts, especially in lieu of the fact that per student expenditure is lower than the comparative districts. One group praised the District efforts for providing a quality education and "getting higher test scores with the same amount of funds other schools are using nationally."

Nearly half of the groups indicated the District's **emphasis on technology**, especially student use in classrooms and the 1:1 iPad initiative, as an area the District is doing correctly. The technology implementation is seen as having a positive impact on students because, as one

group shared, technology is important for "keeping up with opportunities it will provide students for the world they live in." Another group applauded the District for being "a step ahead when it comes to technology."

With 40 different languages in District 34 schools, the group was proud of the **diversity** and how the District is embracing it. The District's diversity is an area that almost half of the groups identified as a positive element.

**Solid, financial management** and the efficient use of resources was identified as another source of pride by CES-1 participants. Several groups stated approval of the District's ability to maintain a quality educational program and at the same time remain fiscally responsible with a balanced budget.

More than any other area, the **quality of the educational staff** was identified as a significant cause to celebrate. The teachers and principals, as well as District leadership, were identified for their dedication to students, parents and community. "We are proud of our District because of the genuine care + passion set from the top down," said one group. "The passion of the staff and ability to address children's needs at all levels" was also stated as a positive.

Participants commended the Board of Education for providing a process like *34Next* so community members participate in planning the future of District 34. This ongoing commitment to **community involvement** and continued efforts to collaborate with parents and residents was seen as a source of pride.

## **BIGGEST SURPRISE**

The **low cost per student vs. high academic performance** surprised a significant number of groups. A majority, 12 of 16 groups, indicated the greatest surprise as students performing at such a high level considering the amount spent per student in comparison to other school districts. One group was surprised to learn the per pupil spending in District 34 is "dramatically lower than neighboring districts." Another commented they learned "that spending per pupil has decreased in D34 vs. others."

While also noted as a source of pride, other groups were not fully aware of how diverse the District is or that **40 separate languages are spoken in homes** of students in District 34. The number of English Language Learners attending D34 schools was a surprise to many of the participants.

Some groups were surprised to learn of the District's **increase in enrollment** and that the District had grown approximately 1,000 students in the last 10 years. One group was positively surprised to learn of the, "increase in enrollment and still meeting and exceeding expectations."

## **GREATEST CONCERN**

The top area of concern focused on **class size** and the potential for larger class sizes in the future. A majority of groups, 10 of 16, expressed concern that with a growing student population class sizes might continue to increase. One group speculated about the impact

increased enrollment and larger class sizes would have on teacher retention. Some participants questioned if, with the low expenditure per student, is the District sacrificing the quality and variety of programming for students.

While the availability of **technology** was a plus, participants did not want total reliance on technology as an instructional tool. While participants believe the District's emphasis on technology is good, there were reminders to balance technology with the use of traditional tools including pencil and paper and textbooks.

Another area of concern questioned whether District 34 is putting too much emphasis on **testing** as the only measure of student success. One group commented that District 34 is a "too test driven district." Another expressed concern about the District's "focus on test scores and testing."

Other concerns were related to **student programs** including appropriate programming like gifted education, full-day kindergarten, special education resources and common core requirements. Participants are concerned if the District is doing all possible via teaching and programs to educate the whole child.

## **TASK #2: QUESTIONS • EXPECTATIONS**

### **QUESTIONS**

Many of the questions presented by the various groups focused on the previously expressed concerns of the participants. Participants questioned if there would be additional population growth and, if so, how is the District going to manage keeping class sizes from continuing to increase. **Increasing enrollment and larger class sizes** were questions shared by a majority of the groups.

Participants repeatedly asked about the possibility of implementing a **full-day kindergarten program**. One group asked about positives and negatives of full day kindergarten, while another simply asked when full day kindergarten would occur.

Questions about **technology** were again shared by participants. Specifically mentioned was the wish for the District to remain at the forefront of technology, but keep it in balance with other important aspects of responding to the needs of the whole child.

Other questions continued to reflect earlier stated concerns of the participants, including **testing**. Participants asked how District 34 defines quality education - is it based on test data or other research that should be considered. Groups also asked if the District is testing too much.

Groups also asked about **curriculum and student programs**. Participants asked about the common core curriculum and if it is going to be implemented throughout all levels. Another question asked what is the long-term plan for accelerated/advanced math. Others questioned the lack of time devoted to the arts.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

Without question, the overwhelming expectation for CES-1 participants is for **student performance levels** to remain high even if there needs to be additional investment per student. "No sacrifice in student performance," said one group. Another stated, "expect high quality education and teachers for all students."

Not only student achievement, but the **needs of the whole child** remain a high expectation. Participants shared their expectation for appropriate programming in place to not only keep test scores high, but to meet the needs of the whole child—academic, social and emotional.

Also related to student success in school, many of the groups indicated the expectation for the District to have a good handle on future **enrollment growth** and manage it in a manner to keep **class size** at an appropriate level for effective teaching and learning.

Groups mentioned the desire for increased focus and effort for staff collaboration and continued strong alignment of District decisions and direction based on community input. Comments included the need to seek consensus on tough decisions and advance discussions involving important changes. Effective **communication and community involvement** are high expectations.

**For a complete listing of all responses  
see the September 10, 2014 CES-1 Verbatim Response Document**