



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
AS A RESULT OF THE  
SMALL GROUP WORK ACTIVITY  
**SESSION #3 • OCTOBER 21, 2014**

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**TASK #1: GREATEST SURPRISE**

What was the greatest surprise your group had from the information provided in the presentation?

**TASK #2: THE FUTURE - DISTRICT LONG-RANGE PLANNING**

If we had to use resources to meet any one or more of the challenges on the horizon, how would you suggest we reallocate our resources? What programs would you want us to protect?

**TASK #3: QUESTIONS – MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

What questions do you have about how D34 has been managing the community's financial resources?

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An estimated group of 36 participants took part in the October 21, 2014 CES-3. However, as in the previous meeting, others present included Facilitating Team members, Board of Education members and some District administrators.

Participants worked in six small groups (approximately 6 participants per group) to complete the three tasks listed above. Following is a summary of the responses from the groups.

**TASK #1: GREATEST SURPRISE**

Following a presentation by Mary Werling, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, about the District's 'Financial Landscape', participants at this 34Next community engagement session were asked to share the information or District facts which they found most surprising.

One topic, **cost per student**, elicited discussion by each group in some form. Participants were surprised to learn the degree of spending, the decrease in the actual dollars spent per pupil, and the projected increase in cost per student.

Most groups, 4 of 6 tables, were unaware of the **district's funding resources** and the actual percentages from various sources, especially State and Federal funding. One group indicated it was surprised "we only received 4% of our funding from Federal/State resources especially given our 20% low income base of students." While another expressed concern that the little amount D34 receives from State and Federal funding could actually be reduced.

The participants also identified the **cost associated with class size**, both increasing or reducing class size, as a surprise.

**TASK #2: THE FUTURE - DISTRICT LONG-RANGE PLANNING**

**PRESERVE**

Overwhelmingly the groups (5 of 6 tables) indicated a strong desire to protect the services and programs directly related to students. **The whole child concept** and **current programs** such as fine arts, gifted and special needs education and foreign languages were identified as programs that must be continued. "We want what we have today" was a common element

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*(Continued - TASK #2: THE FUTURE - DISTRICT LONG-RANGE PLANNING)*

for the groups. One group stated, "We would rather pay more property taxes and keep all current programming in place and possibly add more (earlier foreign language, all day K, expanded gifted learning and plan for on-going professional teacher development)."

When asked how they would reallocate resources and what areas would they protect, participants listed several items including the following: push for revenue increase, pursue neighborhood school concept to reduce transportation costs, adding student fees to subsidize costs and merging D34 schools to increase efficiency.

One group was unanimous in their thinking and strongly stated, "We would not want class sizes increased, even though the bulk (76%) of D34 expenses are salaries and salaries are only controllable via the number of staff."

## **CUT**

Reducing or eliminating programs is never easy. One group summed up its feelings with one statement, "We wouldn't cut anything."

While discussions related to reducing programs did not indicate any one overwhelming topic, participants at four of the tables did list items somewhat related - employee pensions, employee health plans, salaries and number of administrators - as areas for further review.

Two groups listed extracurricular activities as possible areas to be reviewed. Another group listed technology spending as an area to be examined.

## **TASK #3: QUESTIONS – MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

When asked what questions they have about how D34 is managing the community's financial resources, the groups indicated the need for more information related to many of the night's previous discussions.

Questions related to **staffing**, specifically utilizing teacher aides and the number of administrators, were listed by two groups.

Three of the groups indicated a desire to take a proactive approach by asking for strategies to become involved in ways to lobby legislators or how to have a **stronger voice in legislation** that affects D34.

Other questions included discussions around the Aaa rating and the monetary value of this rating; factors in projected District expense increases; what impact do new businesses have on the school district; pension costs; and the Affordable Care Act.

**For a complete listing of all responses  
see the October 21, 2014 CES-3 Verbatim Response Document**