

PSD District Accountability Committee Budget Recommendation Report November 2023

I. Introduction

The District Accountability Committee (DAC) is responsible for recommending to its local school board priorities for spending school district moneys. Whenever the DAC recommends spending priorities, it must make reasonable efforts to consult, in a substantive manner, with the School Accountability Committees (SACs) in the district. Both state and federal accountability place great emphasis on engaging families in the accountability process. While state statute requires the formation of accountability committees, these committees can be activated to help meet many of the ESSA expectations as well (e.g., stakeholder engagement in the planning and implementation process under school improvement). Regardless of the structure, parents are expected to be engaged in meaningful consultation in accountability and improvement planning.

II. Stakeholder Input and Engagement

The District Accountability Committee (DAC) surveyed the principals and their respective School Accountability Committees (SAC) to gather information regarding the long-term budgeting priorities of each school. In the budget survey, each principal and their SAC were asked to respond to the following item:

Please list specific budget priorities for your school within the following areas:

1. Professional Development (PD) Needs
2. Staffing Needs
3. Facility Needs
4. Are there other fiscal areas that need to be addressed?

On both October 18 and November 15, 2023, the DAC met to discuss and synthesize the information gathered from the principals and their respective SACs for the purpose of providing this overview to the Board of Education and Budget Advisory Committee. Additionally, the DAC members analyzed information gathered from the school Unified Improvement Plans. Major improvement strategies from school plans and district Strategic Plan action steps that were developed through a substantial community engagement effort were reviewed to ascertain important districtwide trends and priorities as well as school specific needs.

The DAC has also reviewed the latest achievement, academic growth, attendance, graduation rate, student connections, discipline, and other student outcome data to deepen their shared understanding of current PSD strengths and opportunities for improvement. These key performance indicator reviews have been contextualized by visits from various content experts across a wide array of PSD departments. DAC members also serve on multiple other PSD committees and involve themselves in other authentic interactions with PSD schools and departments. Collectively, the DAC has a solid basis of system knowledge informed by a wide array of community connections from which to make these recommendations.

III. Identification of Priorities Based on Stakeholder Input

Upon reviewing the data, committee members identified the following topics and themes and recommend that these four topics be considered district budget priorities. The intention in sharing these recommendations is that the district address budget constraints while optimizing services for students by focusing on what matters most to our community.

1. **Prioritize professional development** by allocating funds for literacy and math programs, trauma-informed training, and neurodiversity support to enhance curriculum implementation and student/teacher well-being.
2. **Focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion** through staff and curriculum training to create an inclusive learning environment.
3. **Address staffing needs** by prioritizing counseling and mental health support, maintaining specialized teachers, ensuring small class sizes, and providing competitive salaries with incentives for retention.
4. **Attend to facility needs** by enhancing safety measures, installing climate control systems, improving technology-related infrastructure and connectivity, and upgrading sports facilities to create a conducive learning environment.

For more detail regarding the four topics named above, please review the following budget priority considerations that were derived from the stakeholder input and engagement process described above. The information below represents themes that have emerged as identified by the District Accountability Committee.

Professional Development (PD): Enhance curriculum implementation, foster equity and inclusion, support teacher well-being and collaboration, improve language development programs, and ensure safety and security.

1. Curriculum and Instructional Strategies:

- Literacy curriculum adoption & support; structured literacy training and analysis of literacy tasks.
- Math intervention programs and strategies for conceptual understanding.
- Training on trauma-informed practices and addressing neurodiverse populations.

2. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI):

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion training for staff, broadening staff perceptions and awareness.
- Cultural diversity and equity training to support an inclusive learning environment.

3. Teacher Collaboration and Well-being:

- Time and opportunities for collaboration (e.g., teaming, professional learning communities).
- Staff wellness initiatives and training on self-regulation and mental health.
- Incentives and support for teacher retention, including pay for collaboration and book studies.

4. Special Programs and Language Development:

- Training & support for specialized programs (e.g., bilingual best practices, dyslexia support, GT).
- Professional development for English Language Development (ELD) curriculum and strategies.
- Training to support students with diverse needs (special education & language development).

5. Safety, Security, and Well-being:

- Safety and security training for staff.
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) training and restorative practices for behavioral support.
- Training on mental health for both staff and students, focusing on well-being and belonging.

Staffing Needs: Investing in counseling and mental health, maintaining specialized teachers and support staff, addressing class size and academic support, providing administrative and building support, promoting inclusion and integrated services, enhancing security and safety, and ensuring fair compensation and staff retention strategies.

1. Counseling and Mental Health:

- Prioritizing counselors and mental health specialists.
- Supporting behavior coaches and interventionists.

2. Specialized Teachers and Support Staff:

- Maintaining specials classes and GT service staff.
- Allocating resources for English Language Development and instructional support.
- Support teachers attaining CTE certifications. The importance of creative teachers and staff in the success of CTE programs is highlighted. The financial aspect of CTE programming where value is gained from state reimbursements and other sources is noted.
- Provide dedicated substitute teacher for each building to address burnout and staff retention. Also, benefits regarding relationships with students and staff.

3. Class Size and Academic Support:

- Ensure small class sizes and adequate one-on-one time with students.
- Competitive teacher salaries and providing additional staff for interventions, specials, paras, and special projects.
- Investing in instructional coaches to support academics.

4. Administrative and Building Support:

- Funding for full-time assistant principals and health techs.
- Supporting administrative roles and equitable staffing.

5. Security, Safety, and Compensation:

- Allocating funds for increased security and mental health support.
- Enhancing staff compensation and providing incentives for retention.

Facility Needs: Prioritize maintenance, safety, comfort, technology, and sports facilities within the school buildings, aiming to create a conducive and equitable learning environment for students and staff.

1. Safety and Maintenance:

- Enhancing safety measures and maintaining the building infrastructure.
- Addressing safety concerns related to traffic patterns, signage, and cell phone coverage.

2. Climate Control and Comfort: Installing air conditioning and implementing heat mitigation measures.

3. Technology and Connectivity: Improving technology-related infrastructure and connectivity.

4. Sports and Athletics Facilities: Upgrading sports and athletic facilities to support physical activities.

Other fiscal areas that need to be addressed: Enrich student experiences, improve transportation, and provide adequate educational tools and resources.

1. Student Enrichment and Resources:

- Funding for community events, after-school opportunities, field trips, and special assemblies.
- Elevating partnerships with the city and leveraging community resources was highlighted as a possible strategy.
- Providing playground equipment, technology subscriptions, and materials for various subjects like science.

2. Transportation and Accessibility:

- Funding for transportation, including new buses and improved accessibility for students to participate in clubs, athletics, and extended learning.
- The idea of partnering with the city for transportation and leveraging community resources was highlighted as a possible strategy to provide enhanced transportation.

3. Educational Tools and Interest-Based Curriculum:

- Acquiring curricular materials and supplies to match updated educational sequences and support various programs like SEL, Core Knowledge, and CTE. Focus on providing students with choices and pathways in addition to a traditional diploma. The positive impact on graduation rates and student success is acknowledged, with a belief that there is an intersection of mental health and belonging within these interest-based programs.

IV. Conclusion:

On behalf of the District Accountability Committee (DAC), we want to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to actively participate in the identification of budget priorities for our school district. Your commitment to transparency and collaboration is truly commendable. We are grateful for the open dialogue that has been fostered, allowing us to contribute our perspectives and insights into the budgeting process. Being part of the discussions on budget priorities has not only been enlightening but has also reinforced our belief in the collaborative spirit that defines our district. Your recognition of the value that parents bring to the table demonstrates a commitment to student success that goes beyond the classroom.

As parents, we understand the challenges and complexities involved in budgetary decision-making. Your willingness to engage with us and consider our input speaks volumes about the dedication of the Board of Education to the well-being and educational experiences of our children. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and working together to ensure that our school district's budget reflects the aspirations and needs of our diverse community.

With sincere appreciation,

Michael Werner, DAC Co-Chair

Dwayne Schmitz, DAC Co-Chair