

PSD Budget Development 2009-10: Information & Input Meetings

January 28 Meeting, Large group format

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Technology
- Early childhood education
- Math and science focus
- Class size as small as possible (at least 4 requested this. Student said it's very hard to learn and get individual attention in large classes)
- Gifted/talented funding.
- Arts, Whole child; music, art, PE (2)
- Focus on teaching and instruction; not as much on facilities
- 5-day school schedule
- Current length of day
- Provide transportation, due to low income/equity of services for all.
- Increase or retain instructional coaches because it improves instruction
- Student-based budgeting levels (funding for schools)

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Close small schools and consolidate (long discussion, support expressed); act on the Small Schools Study findings and research you have already done
- Have larger class sizes
- Benchmark other districts for ways they save, use as models
- Transfer the football program to the City of Fort Collins, using PSD facilities
- Contract for best fuel costs over long period to get best prices
- Mandate unpaid furloughs for staff
- Give only merit increases based on performance
- Reduce staff, FTEs
- Consider 10% pay cuts instead of layoffs.
- Look for grouping for efficiencies
- Set measures and benchmarks
- Make sure facilities and maintenance practices are efficient
- Let grass/turf go dormant
- Create fewer transportation/bus routes
- Hold longer school days and a shorter week
- Shorten the school year by eliminating "work days"
- Reduce the gifted/talented factor in student-based budgeting; is it really effective?
- Defer maintenance
- Eliminate busing altogether (encourage students to ride City Transport buses or walk)
- Examine school lunches for savings
- Prospect site – delay construction or use existing locations/facilities; hold capital funds and reallocate, if possible; use for renovations on existing facilities
- Reward schools for efficiencies
- Allow schools to carry over budget savings/funds from previous year
- Shop/bid for best prices and values (tighten belts)

- Take action on areas of savings/cuts you've already researched
- Technology: keep it usable and relevant to effective learning
- Revisit textbook usage – do we really need new materials; is this an effective use of funds
- Utilize/get more students to attend energy efficient schools and away from older schools
- Make do with what you have for 1-2 years
- Save on utility costs by adjusting temperatures lower/higher for savings
- Think outside the box (i.e. 4-day school week)
- Consider regional library partnerships or grouping, or mobile library units so every school does not have to have a library
- Look at efficiencies related to snow removal at schools
- Find Eco Week transportation efficiencies
- Consider K-8 in consolidation plans
- Consider core knowledge curriculum for low income kids by E.D. Hirsch, a self-proclaimed liberal democrat.
- Use open source software (free) instead of expensive proprietary software. Consider Linux, open office, etc.

February 2 Meeting, Small group format

Group A:

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Keeping focus on curriculum and instruction a high priority; the daily classroom instruction of the students in the classroom.
- Media and IT: providing students access to new technologies and the related staff training to help the students continue to provide technology to monitor students' academic growth.
- Focus on early childhood education: full day kindergarten, Head Start
- Literacy proficiency at grade 3
- Keep budget priorities in line with the 4 learning goals. If we believe in the learning goals, they should be our guiding star.
- Don't cut to such a basic level that there is no variety that kids are not engaged.
- Keeping pupil services (special education, special programs, etc.) intact.
- Maximize the usage of bus routes.
- Don't cut programs/services and create a bigger divide between the "have" and "have not" populations, as a result of decisions being made.
- Utilize President Obama's organizing techniques to get the entire community involved.

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Put staff development on hold as much as possible.
- Outsource business services.
- Look at student enrollment numbers and close/mothball schools that don't meet criteria.
- Examine outdoor services in terms of necessity and or green practices.
- Disseminate Rocky Mountain High School practices for energy savings; pursue federal funding for solar, etc.
- Look at wise use of consumables.
- Look at textbook purchases and perhaps utilize other methods of information, i.e. technology sources.
- Look into community donations and volunteers for supplies/consumables and in the classroom.

- Utilize email more for communications from the district, look at elementary in particular.
- Allow volunteers to substitute teach, i.e., attorneys, HP employees, etc.
- Advertise on buses and athletic fields for income.
- Longer days/shorter weeks; look at calendar for vacations, start of school and end of school.
- Furlough of year round employees for X (?) days per year.
- Use Voice over IP (VOIP) for phone system cost savings.

Group B:

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Too many schools – need to close elementary schools, making remaining schools stronger. Schools are sharing specials and that's not good for education. Closing schools would have to be done carefully.
- Teachers highly qualified
- Small class sizes
- Technology – 21st Century skills
- Everything interfacing with students, children
- Increasing volunteers (consider increasing CSU students, Senior Citizen)
- Energy efficiencies
- Foreign language in all schools

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Standardized test expenditures – decrease costs
- Consolidating special education and at risk program resources
- Making 4 school days/longer days and only extra-curricular on the 5th day of school
- Year round school (like a school near Denver); more kids/fewer buildings
- Less busing of kids
- Outdoor resources—ok if they are not updated as long as it's safe
- Communications – less
- Closing or consolidating small schools (close carefully); downside would be more busing needed.
- Lunches – more efficient

Group C:

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- The thought is that the impact should be felt least directly in the classroom and instruction.
- Continue to provide Pre-AP and AP choices.
- Continue to provide a wide range of course choices—particularly at the upper levels
- Do not cut specials!! Particularly elementary, and related classes in middle schools.
- Do not increase class sizes (noted as very important)

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions (not necessarily in priority order):

- Employee wages – perhaps a freeze
- Can we group special needs students instead of offering these programs at every school?
- Limit school choice
- Sharing utility efficiencies in our buildings by recycling and turning off electricity
- Start the school year later and end later to save energy costs

- Consolidation of elementary schools with lowering enrollment numbers. We may need to make some difficult decisions and close schools. Small schools limit 250 (students).
- Consider equalizing the funding for art, music and athletics
- Increase the walk radius for our bus system
- Fee-based transportation system
- Fund-raising at the schools (box tops, caps 4 cash, PTOs, etc.)
- Cut back on landscaping, outdoor maintenance
- Xeriscaping over time where grass is not needed
- Utilize Transfort in conjunction with the Bohemian Foundation and PSD transportation

Group D:

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Small schools
- Small class sizes
- Literacy support
- Specials

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Lab School consolidation or elimination
- Central office reduction
- Go back to the original grade configuration for the time being (until the budget is better)

Other comments or recommendations:

- Ask principals and teacher as they would know best

Group E:

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Quality education (core subjects)
- Special education services (for her son)
- Gifted and Talented programs
- All at-risk students are important
- Whether mandated or not, ask "should we provide this program?"
- Art, music, sports, forensics, drama (these classes could be bigger)
- Home bound program
- Front-load each teacher's curriculum online. Kids could print out notes, then seat time would be more instructional and effective. Parent tutors could be more helpful; they could access the content.

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Cut each area by a specified percentage (i.e. 5% across the board)
- Consolidate schools
- Cut all funding for extracurricular activities
- 4-day work week (or every other week)
- Cut AP classes if less than 10 students per class
- Increase class sizes

- Cut teachers and/or wages
- Fill up classrooms
- Efficient class schedules, block schedules, equity in schedules
- Transportation: charge fees; Increase distances from school to bus students
- Economies of scale (use this concept)
- Extend life of textbooks
- Meet minimum legal requirements for seat (instructional) time
- Fewer School Resource Officers (SROs). Are they necessary at middle schools?
- Fewer assistant principals at the high school level
- Freeze salaries
- Teachers' benefits are the best in the area. Cut some coverage. (Have staff) pay more for their benefits. Pay higher deductible.

Other comments or recommendations:

- Have this discussion with teachers. They have more information.

February 11 Meeting, Small group format

Group A

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Kids, classroom size
- School environment – utilities, good learning environment, safety of facilities
- Support staff—literacy paraprofessionals at school level
- Counseling
- Specials and electives –whole child issues
- Maintain equity
- Don't cut custodial services

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Are we being effective with employee insurance, benefits?
- Keep technology at flat levels
- Summer school – effectiveness vs. costs
- Flat salaries to maintain staff, services
- Review of outsourcing – is it effective
- Textbooks
- Look at athletics
- School size

Group B

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Well-trained staff (instructional paraprofessionals and effective teachers) to meet differentiated needs
- Media and technology to keep up
- Recruitment/retention of qualified staff in all areas

- Pay attractive salaries to teachers
- Continue with efficient Information Technology (IT) – no cuts; needs will continue to grow
- Well kept facilities. Maintain the maintenance of our buildings
- Keep the kids in class more! Stop interruptions and decreasing instructional time
- Educate students

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Review/examine curriculum department for reductions of Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs), some new tasks to classified who already do a lot of the work. Why 2 directors?
- Review assessment department – what is required by state?
- Stop CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program testing) temporarily until economics recover
- Stop MAPs (Measures of Academic Progress testing) due to cost and inefficient value
- Teachers take pay cuts at the end of the school year when they teach summer school. Have everyone else take the same pay cut!
- Better use of facilities – community programs in building not needed
- Use students for some staff positions (formal process, work/study, custodial, special needs students)
- Expand Early Childhood program into all buildings
- Cost of employee/consultant time working on making the district “green” vs. the benefits?
- Revisit closing/selling Lab School – no more money for improvements
- Combine some programs where it makes sense
- Evaluate all programs for effectiveness: does it increase student achievement?
- Assign principals to classroom ½ day; also “job share” assistant principals. Creates true “educational leaders”
- Central office – work 2 hours a month in a school

Group C

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Keep teachers in the classroom
- The district continue to fund 2 of the large initiatives that are currently underway: (1) grade reconfiguration and (2) RtI (Response to Intervention)
- Put these 2 initiatives on hold so we can continue to fund educational programs
- Look at programs and determine which have large (positive) impact on kids, and determine which ones do not and eliminate
- Same for considering cost for multiple assessments that are being done and which ones need to continue
- Consider communication to state – i.e., which state mandated programs, RtI, CSAP administration, can be put on hold?
- Money needs to go to the classroom before athletics
- Class size need to be considered; need to be aware of effective student/teacher ratios

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Close schools
- Raise athletic fees
- Transportation efficiencies – continue
- Reduced work week, i.e., 4 days per week for schools as well as support services

- State and federal communications – proposal to legislators to put CSAP and NCLB on hold, which will save money and in turn provide more time for educating students
- Where is the mill levy discussion? What is going to be included that we need to start community discussions/facilitation so community can begin to learn?

Other comments:

- We need to communicate to public, parents, constituents that due to funding, our district is looking and needing to operate differently (i.e. 4 people now doing the job of 10, etc.). If personnel or jobs are eliminated, there need to be an elimination of tasks associated with that person.

Group D

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Classroom size needs to be reasonable and not increase
- Increase paraprofessional support in special ed classes and mainstream classes
- Workforce readiness opportunities and vocational support
- Physical education teachers – keep funding
- Healthy foods available
- Specials classes/whole child (music, art, P.E.)
- Instructional support for teachers, especially in the context of implementing PLCs/Rtl (Professional Learning Communities/Response to Intervention), learning goals, Board “Ends”
- Need quality professional development
- Assessment to meet mandates and support instruction – not more assessments, but high quality
- Technology – need to stay current
- School administration is necessary to effectively lead schools
- Put resources into school reform, support of 21st century learning
- Consolidate small schools carefully, with purpose for how the new learning environments are created (don’t eliminate Lab School; need expeditionary learning)
- Put resources into quality learning, not obsession with tests that may not assess what is essential
- Civic education

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Be more efficient with the use of consumable instructional supplies
- Textbook adoptions – start using more technology
- Look for “green grants” to support using less paper materials
- Look for community sponsorship for specific needs in the district
- Look for building/facilities efficiencies, especially environmentally friendly practices
- More xeriscaping
- Are there ways to reduce assessment funding? Assessment – is it being funded disproportionately?
- Parking and other fees? (e.g., make summer band fee based)
- Reduce financial support for programs that don’t really support 21st century learning
- Evaluate electives – keep ones that are most effective, get rid of others; develop electives that highlight learning priorities (such as healthy cooking, technology, etc.)
- Utilize community resources in targeted ways – examine policies that make it difficult for the community to support PSD
- Make classes more integrated and targeted
- Examine summer school efficiencies

- Examine school choice costs and transportation
- Stop putting money/resources into 20th century practices
- Examine efficiencies for supervision of kids while not in class
- Engage parents more to help meet needs

Group E

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Small class size, student/teacher ratio
- Integrated education (English Language Learners)
- Literacy instruction
- Media and technology
- Staff Development
- Staffing
- Classified support staff
- Early childhood education
- Paying staff to maintain current levels; focus on teachers, administrators
- Materials
- What makes job easier for teachers
- Special services

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions (this group organized/ranked suggested reductions by the broad areas on the handout sheet; 1st, 2nd, 3rd priorities for reductions):

- 1st priorities were:
 - Staff development
 - Consumable instructional supplies
 - Partnerships and Volunteers
 - Telephone/Data Lines
- 2nd priorities were:
 - School budgets (Student-Based Budgets): classroom instruction, office and other classified support, basic school operations
 - Athletics
 - Communications
 - Business services
 - Human resources (personnel, recruitment, etc.)
 - Operations (school security, energy administration, property management, building rental maintenance, utility upgrades, facility maintenance, energy rebates, etc.)
 - Building maintenance
 - Outdoor services
 - Custodial maintenance
 - Transportation services
- 3rd priorities were:
 - Specialized and/or alternative educational programs
 - Integrates services (special education)
 - Media and Technology (graphics, educational technology, etc.)

- Information Technology (PC support, records, maintenance, data communications, etc.)
- Pupil services (guidance and counseling, dropout prevention, Hispanic outreach, etc.)

Group F

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Title I (extra assistance and support for elementary students in reading and math based on poverty level and need)
- English Language Learners (ELL), English Language Acquisition (ELA)
- NCLB (No Child Left Behind federal education legislation)
- Classroom instruction
- Small class size – would be willing to take pay cut if it's across the board – everybody feels the pain
- Curriculum, instruction
- Data information – IT (information technology) keep up to date
- Pupil Services – increase it. Counseling is available for special needs and college bound; but the middle kids are not served

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Textbooks:
 - Extend life of textbooks (extend length of adoption)
 - Be conservative with textbooks (had 3 math adoptions in 10 years)
 - Online textbooks
- Human resources recruitment – we have many people who want to work for PSD. Hire local instead of out of state.
- Pupil services – combine and/or subcontract with community providers
- Outsource services so we don't have to pay benefits
- Maintenance – outsource it
- Outdoor services, custodial – outsource
- Transportation:
 - Partner with the city or hire a private provider.
 - Charge fees
 - Bus routes – streamline routes
 - Have elementary and junior highs that are next to each other start at the same time to those kids can ride the same bus (Cache LaPoudre)
- Facility usage: are spaces being utilized to the fullest in each of our schools?
- Combine schools/programs to fully use a building and save custodial fees, etc.
- Is site-based management efficient? There isn't one person looking at the whole picture. It should be done the same way at all schools. Consistency brings efficiencies.
- Where is accountability at the site for prudent use of funds?
- Staff development – Staff development must be done as efficiently as possible. There should be consistency from school to school.

Group G

Budget Priorities: Retain or keep current levels

- Teachers
- Special needs programs
- Early intervention programs

- Keeping choice for students
- Manageable class size and equitable
- Integration of special populations
- Creative ways to keep up with technology an d21st century (skills)

Areas for budget efficiencies or reductions:

- Combine or close small schools now
- Redefine what choice is
- Transportation
 - Expand or change boundaries, limitations
 - Work with public transit
- Limit or streamline assessment practices
- Reduce or combine extracurricular activities; reduce distances to travel
- Could some schools be K-8?
- Consolidate preschool to 1 site, i.e., Barton and Fullana
- Review textbook adoption cycle – less use; shift to use more technology
- 4 days with longer days vs. 5 day school week
- Center for staff development and use for other agencies
- Gaps: career education
- More resources from universities, i.e., interns to supplement
- Strengthen volunteer program