

2009 Budget Survey Results

This budget survey was on line for about one month to solicit input from the District 69 community regarding upcoming budget cuts necessary to balance the district's budget. The survey asked three questions:

What should be cut first? What should be cut next? What should be the very last to be cut?

Since these questions were very open ended, it is difficult to tabulate the results. Therefore, the results will be presented in "raw" form. What follows is nearly everything we received. Two brief comments were edited out because they were opinions regarding the performance of specific personnel as opposed to addressing the budget issue.

Please remember as you read these results that there are many inaccuracies stated. The best example is the one that starts out with, "Is it really necessary to pay your board members over \$100,000 each?" As most people know, School Board members are community volunteers who are elected to serve with no compensation whatsoever. So, please take this information for what it is: opinions. While some opinions are presented by more informed citizens, others are not.

That being said, I can say that the results of this survey played an important role in my decision-making process as I developed the proposed cuts. The proposed cuts were presented to the Board of Education at its regular meeting on January 19, 2010 and are available on line in that Board packet. The Board will be asked to approve them at their meeting on February 16, 2010.

Thanks to all who participated in the survey and the Town Hall meeting.

Dr. Kenneth L. Cull, Superintendent

District 69 Budget Survey December 18, 2009

- ❖ Data represents 58 responses
- ❖ Data from 2 survey responses was pulled
 - 1 data set was blank
 - 1 data set was identified by the survey software as being a duplicate

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first?

- Gifted Program, Ell Coordinator, Business Services Coordinator or Receptionist, Nonacademic After School Activities
- attorney's fees such as those fighting with employees over legal issues Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum position Consultants teacher education nonurgent building projects such as resurfacing of parking lots when they didn't need it, new playground which could have been done by fundraising by PTA
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction Position-small district and no money for curriculum and other duties can be covered by other admin. Gifted Program Cut all expensive consultants, they are not worth the money they charge Cut back on supply budgets Cut assistant bookkeeper position-small district should only need one bookkeeper After school activities at K-5 level with exception of activities geared toward improving academics
- music, art, gym, after-school programs, aides (kindergarten)
- Programs, computer programs. I would suggest looking into a medium to long term elimination of expensive Microsoft software and replacing it with free Linux alternatives. Microsoft software teaches our kids to be good consumers of Microsoft products the same way that Chuck E. Cheese conditions our kids to be prepared to chuck money in slot machines in a casino. Further, migration to the latest Microsoft offerings, Windows 7, Office 2010, etc. may require a simultaneous hardware upgrade. Linux products are typically not as demanding on the hardware and would allow computers to be used somewhat longer, stretching the life of the hardware.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- aides, explores, director of curriculum, full coverage insurance for admin. ASA programs, teacher budgets, library position- go 1/2 time, sub coverage for committees and meetings
- unnecessary building projects (such as repaving a perfectly fine parking lot or replacing perfectly functional toilets,) fully paid family benefits for administrators
- Lincoln Administration District Office
- At the primary school, cut out all the subs that are used to cover meetings during the school days.
- administration, after-school activities, extra-duty pay
- I would propose After School Activities be the first expense cut. Since there is typically a glut of flyers going home, trying to go paperless would help save expenses. Unless it is self-sustaining, the Breakfast Program. Does the District need five social workers?
- administration salaries
- administrative positions, salaries, and benefits
- gifted aides administration at Lincoln
- Vice Principal of Lincoln Dean of Lincoln
- Positions: Skokie school district has 6 different districts. If the city of Chicago can function on 1 school district I think that Skokie could function on 3. I know this would mean a lot of people would be unemployed but at the same time I think it would mean savings for the entire community. Our school system has been financially abused for so long the cracks are showing everywhere.
- Madison and Lincoln do not need more than one administrator in the building. Smaller districts do not need curriculum directors or coordinators. Also, the Gifted program, band, and orchestra because it is only for a small population of students. We don't need part time PE.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Lincoln administration Music Electives at Lincoln Classes that have low enrollment at Lincoln
- Administrators at Lincoln
- Admin Staff and Tech Support Staff. With technology today, do you really need someone to answer the phones in the Admin office? Do you really need an assistant to the bookkeeper? Do you really need a person to run the mail between the schools? One admin assistant in each school office is all that is needed. I've seen two at each school except for Edison. As far as Tech support staff, once Edison is connected via the Fiber Optics the need for a tech person at each school is unnecessary. Two Jr. Techs along with the Sr. Tech should be able to take care of all three schools. Is it really necessary to have LMC aids with the Librarians? Keep one librarian in each school, but they should be able to handle it without the aids, or at the most have a LMC Aide be available based on specific needs for all three schools. Maybe the LMC aide could work with the tech personnel. I've been in the school libraries at various times and I believe it could work with just the librarian. I would hate to see the After School activities cut, because some of the programs are indeed educational. Maybe you could charge more from the families who want to send their children to afterschool programs to help pay the teachers and extra materials needed for these programs. Look into setting up some programs with the experts from the local community. Cut where you can where it does not affect the children. Maybe even cut a principal. Have one Principal manage Madison and Edison. For Lincoln, do you need a principal, an assistant principal and a Dean of Students? I understand the additional challenges in our Jr. High, but there seems to be excess administration at Lincoln. Who pays for the Pre-School admin staff? I hope you no longer have an additional "asst principal" for that and the special education. Do you get money from the state for the administration of the preschool program? If District 69 has to pay for any portion of the program it should be dropped. There are other preschool programs available in this area. You could better utilize that space.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first?

(Continued)

- After school activities Before school free babysitting (also known as drop-in) lunch-time extra duties (homework help group) adjust benefits to be the same for everyone (if staff pays a percentage of their health insurance, so should administrators)
- Gifted education. This does not affect a large portion of our student population.
- salaries and benefits of administrators! your budget is up 20% from last year, how do you expect to continue to spend more than you take in? if we are going to pay administrators ridiculous amounts of money, they should at least balance the budget! I will lobby for school district consolidation. time has come!
- This is hard to say without a list of programs to see here
- Administration,
- Administration!
- I do not feel any programs should be cut, since they are all necessary to well-rounded education. I do feel, however, other departments can be reduced. For example, something as simple as school lunches can be addressed. Possibly offer by lottery how many school lunches will be provided (perhaps for just the low income children) and have everyone else bring a packed lunch. Secondly, I would lower the heat in the building a few degrees. Thirdly, I would ask teachers to take furloughs of a week (or more depending on the budget problem). I would assume it is more cost-effective to have a substitute teacher in place as opposed to a staff member.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Administrators should be the very first expenses to be cut. These are relatively large salaries and while I admire their work, I think their direct impact on children is minimal. If I have to choose, I will always choose enrichment programs and class size over administrative overhead.
- administrative positions after school club activities
- extra-curricular, supplies (i.e. funding for classroom supplies could be cut down or broad-lined)
- administration
- Psychologists - I feel they are more interested in getting children into programs to get FUNDING for the school than they are interested in actually helping children.
- Please consult with District 73.5 to find out how they were able to negotiate their salary contracts to vary with the Consumer Price Index. This would bring the majority of expenses in line with the revenue, which varies with the Consumer Price Index.
- Extra administrative positions should be cut first - maybe some positions can be combined or become 1/2 time positions. I'm not sure if this is part of the budget being considered, but perhaps material costs could be looked at, too. I'm thinking of school supplies like paper, and other classroom resources.
- Pre-school, unless tuition and state money make it profitable on its own. See comment for Question 2 below - we need more information in order to provide good input.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Director of Instructional Services and Business Manager... The Superintendent should be qualified to take on these extra jobs.
- Ask all administrators to take a 5% cut in their salaries, all teachers to take a 4% cut in their salaries, and all support staff a 3% cut in their hourly wages. They all would be better off than those that are unemployed.
- Administration employee's salaries should be cut first and positions should be consolidated.
- cut teachers and employees salary. we gave them raise but the level and quality went down
- How about not buying any more SMARTBOARDS? My 12 year old is smart enough to know we shouldn't be buying these when we don't have enough funds.
- Administrative (specifically Curriculum Director). For the first 20 years of our 40 year residency in the district, we had a wonderful school curriculum without the position of Curriculum Director.
- Pre-school, unless tuition and state money make it profitable on its own. Breakfast program.
- After school programs, all day kindergarten and programs that are for just a few students. Lincoln school has two people in the office and many administrators. Are all needed? Our test scores are going down. District staff. Is a receptionist needed? Dir. of Curriculum. Can that position be cut?

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Classroom aides, extra administrator positions
- Programs and services that impact the students should be the last to go. Look to the administrative overload first! Before you increase class size by reducing the teaching staff there should be a reduction in administration. There are too many people at that level for the size and nature of our district. If any administrators have free health insurance, that too could change.
- The budget cuts should be across the board in all areas not affected by contract obligations. Every area needs to start thinking outside the box and creatively deal with the challenge of spending less. Work should be started to consolidate Skokie school districts into one with the the direct goal of cutting costs.
- Is it really necessary to pay your board members over \$100,000 each? This doesn't include their health care packages either. This is what disgusts the taxpayers. Most of us make \$35,000 a year and we are expected to pay your absurd salaries under a disguise of the ""children"". You should be ashamed of yourselves.
- Programs such as art, music, and library should be cut first. These are programs that can be done in the classroom with the classroom teachers. I think this will save a lot of money if these can be done in the students classroom.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Eliminate TOPS.
- Gifted and administration. The administration is top heavy for such a small district with as many as three administrators at some buildings.
- I would recommend looking at administrative expenses first. Particular, Skokie has 5 school districts and while consolidation of schools may be time consuming and expensive, this district and the remaining districts should consider modernizing the administration of the 5 schools by consolidating the administrative functions.
- Rather than cutting teaching positions, how about cutting Teacher Institute Days down from 4 to 2? The other two days could either be unpaid days off or you could shorten the school year by two days. If you reduced all the teachers' salaries by two days, it should more than pay for another teaching position or two. It would also eliminate the expense of providing the programs for those two days (i.e. speaker fees, food, heating/cooling and other overhead costs.)
- Free health care for admin. Cut curriculum director position Cut ELL director position
- any administrative positions that were added since the '06 referendum should be cut or cut back, since they do not benefit the kids directly.

1) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut first? (Continued)

- Line items need to be looked individually, thus a comprehensive audit must be undertaken. Day to day operations as well as spending at all levels from the ground floor up from daily to weekly, monthly and annual subscriptions need to be analyzed. By looking and analyzing everything across the board, decisions can be made on a line item by line item basis and can be looked at and analyzed individually which would be a great start.
- Start at the top, look at administrative cuts that can be made in all buildings. After school programs at Madison and Edison should support themselves or be cut. Gifted education programming - these children can be groups like those in need of resource help, and given extra support in their classrooms. Supplies for classrooms should be looked at closely to eliminate waste and repetition, and to find ways to cut costs (ordering in quantity, etc.)

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next?

- Band/Orchestra, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- gifted ed program at junior high; in current form is useless anyway possibly art for Madison, maybe teachers aides could be trained to do simple projects assistant principal position police officer at Lincoln position
- Possibly reduce number of class sections dependent on enrollment After school activities at 6-8 level with exception of sports and activities geared toward improving academics
- gifted
- Examine some of the other software in use and evaluate less expensive or freeware alternatives.
- an ELL position at Madison,
- increase classroom size (incl. self-contained, maybe combine grades)
- Paraprofessionals for Kindergarten and extra paraprofessionals from Special Education
- Cut 1/2 the aides. Cut 1/2 the money for supplies.
- supply budgets for teachers, technology, aides
- Go back to half day kindergarten and eliminate the kindergarten aides. PE teacher at Lincoln, since the other schools get by with 1 1/2 teachers. Band and Orchestra.

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next? (Continued)

- extra duty pay
- Work with teachers and staff to ""go wireless"" and save paper. Find other ways to cut costs of supplies.
- one teacher for each grade music
- Gifted
- social workers, psychologists, and speech pathologists can work between buildings. A section per grade level can be lowered. Special Education classes can be combined to be multi-grade.
- One teacher at each grade Supply budgets
- Paraprofessionals One teacher at each grade One Reading Teacher from each building
- If you have to cut any of the Arts programs, maybe you could set up something like you have with the Band and Orchestra. For Music, have the best teacher Mr. Schroer :) take on Madison school and he could travel between the schools. I'm not familiar with Lincoln so it's difficult for me to say that Mr. Schroer could also take on that school, but I'm sure he could handle the two schools. As far as Art goes, especially for the younger age children, the teachers could take on Art projects into their regular curriculum. I'm not an artist, and I'm sure the majority of your teachers are not artists, but maybe one "Art" teacher could teach art for the older children as an elective. So that they can only teach those students who are artistic to help them further their talents. Look for more grants to support these programs.

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next? (Continued)

- increase classroom size, but set a reasonable limit (maximum of 27 per classroom, for example) Do school offices really have to be open 12 months? Could they be closed for 2-4 weeks over the summer and 1 week over Christmas? Do we need a tech person at each building? Maybe 2 floating between 4 locations (Madison, Edison, Lincoln, District Office)?
- Some of our program coordinators at the administration level. These would least affect the students directly.
- pensions and benefits of administrators!
- Technology
- Getting paid for duties/ ASA
- Possibly PE since this can be provided to the students by parents. It is not very difficult to get kids active, and it requires no expertise on the part of the parents.
- Administrative staff and aids.
- some assistants gifted
- Teacher's Assistants

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next? (Continued)

- extracurricular; clubs, sports
- Social Workers
- Other parts of the budget should be cut an equal amount across the board.
- Class size should be carefully looked at. Although I am not in favor of huge class sizes, there may be grade levels where one position could be cut. Do our test scores support our smaller classes? Neighboring districts have larger class sizes and better scores.
- You're asking us to make choices without sufficient information. To make informed decisions/inputs, we need to know line item expenses for all of the programs and positions – for example, how much do sports programs cost vs. student fees to participate? After-school activities? Pre-school finances – Income (State money, tuition, District subsidy, ...) vs. Expenses? Can income be raised - higher fees, pre-school tuition?, etc. Please provide this information at the meeting on Monday.
- Business Services Coordinator, Assistant Bookkeeper, and at Lincoln Jr. High, Assistant Principal and/or Dean of Students. Also extra Secretary at Lincoln. I want to see the Administration taking on more responsibilities.
- The public would need to know about the allocations for various program to make a comment beyond salaries.

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next? (Continued)

- Extracurricular activities at all schools.
- Investigate the consolidation of school districts in Skokie. What is the advantage of having a school district with only 3 schools?
- Administrative (specifically ELL Director). The ELL teachers can collectively coordinate their own program.
- What is the cost for each one - then we can rate them
- The district seems to have many music teachers. Are they all needed?
- Special education aides
- There seems to be a lot of meetings which take away from the teacher being in the classroom and the need for many subs.
- If those under contract obligation will not negotiate, cuts should be made in those positions with the criteria of minimizing the negative impact on children.
- see question 1
- After school activities should be cut next. This money can go toward programs that are needed for the schools and students. This money can go toward the teachers buying resources for teaching.

2) What programs, positions or expenses should be cut next? (Continued)

- Make program cuts and curriculum changes including: K-3 cut Music and Art; 7 - 8, reduce English class back to single period; 6-8 cut Independent study/enrichment classes.
- social work, librarians
- Cut either dean or assistant principal...don't need both.
- Full-day kindergarten should be cut back to half-day. My older kids did great with half-day kindergarten -- in fact, it was probably a better transition to full-time school.
- Again as stated above by analyzing line by line information these decisions can be co-mingled. Not just what's 1st and next but what things can be analyzed and either reduced or cut based on group decisions. Discussion groups should be made at both the grade level and entire school level (each of the 3 schools) as well as ""town hall"" type meetings with ALL teachers. The same should be undertaken with administrators.
- Support staff - lunchroom, recess, office, aids Teacher salaries and benefits (not that this is likely)

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut?

- Teachers in the elementary schools where it would make class sizes bigger than 27-28 students.
- classes and after school programs
- art, gym, music, special ed-especially if the district cuts a section of each grade level resulting in larger class sizes and will be limiting the number of students sent out of building for special ed services keep full day kindergarten and preschool programs
- Academic, Reading, Writing and Math, special education
- Don't touch working people. Or their pensions.
- section of each grade level, special education, specials
- specials teachers, interventions (Reading, ELL, resource)
- Gym
- Special education, ELL, classroom teachers. Large class sizes would only decrease already poor test scores in reading.
- classroom teachers, custodians, teacher benefits
- Grade level teachers, the Gifted Program, Art and Music. Students still need some Specials.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- The classroom teachers jobs are the most important to be maintained. Class sizes should not be any higher than they are.
- classroom teachers
- Teacher & staff salaries should stay the same. Find other methods of cutting the budget.
- gym
- Orchestra
- LMC because it services all students and it is some students' only experience with books and computers. ELL is necessary because immigrant numbers coming into our area are rising each year and they need the specialized educational environment to help them achieve, each building needs two ELL teachers to provide adequate service.
- Gym classes Art classes Teachers/ Staff that support Rtl
- school police physical ed
- Compare teachers and administrators pay and benefit packages to other ""well working districts"" around the states and see if it is really necessary to provide such ""outstanding"" packages to our District personnel. Ask administrators and staff to take a look at what they can do to help keep all the personnel employed and to avoid layoffs and cuts. Can these well paid administrators and staff take cuts in pay and a more equitable insurance/401k/benefit program to other school districts and other local industries? How much are they willing to step up to the plate to do their part in saving their peers jobs and providing the best for the children? As I review this, I think this should be your first step and not the last.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- Specials (Art, PE, Music) Aides
- Classroom teachers. This would make for larger class sizes and much harder for a student to receive the support they need.
- teacher's salaries
- The Explorers program
- Gifted, full day kindergarden
- TEACHERS!
- The gifted program should be the last to go. If that is cut we are in danger of losing good minds to boredom. Psychologically, bright students prove to be poor performers when bored, and we as a society cannot afford this.
- You should NOT cut the Explorers program, art, or music. The Explorers program has one teacher enriching the lives of over 50 students at Madison and Edison. That is a huge impact for one salary. Prior to the beginning of the Explorers program, my son was not being challenged. I have seen a huge change since enrichment programs have entered the school district's curriculum. It went from a relatively mediocre school district to one that is truly inspiring children to meet their achievement goals.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- classrooms/classroom teachers reading specialists/reading programs ELL teachers/programs
specials classes (gym art music)
- Teachers positions
- classroom teachers, reading specialists, ELL
- Aids anyone who works directly with the children, they are most invested in them, want them to succeed, and do the most good.
- After school activities should not be cancelled as they were in the past. At other schools (feel free to check with Deerfield), the activities are run by parent volunteers, are paid for by participants, and are not a cost for the school district. There would be a fund for those who cannot afford it.
- I would object to any cuts regarding the arts, p.e., or gifted ed. programs. These programs connect with students and are what help to make our schools competitive in the township.
- Teacher positions at Madison, Edison and Lincoln - do not increase class sizes. Safety officer at Lincoln.
- Teachers and aides that work directly with students.
- Amount of classroom teachers. Keeping class sizes small is very important to student success.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- teachers
- Teacher positions at Madison, Edison and Lincoln - do not increase class sizes. Safety officer at Lincoln. Band & Gifted at Lincoln. Art at Madison, Edison, Lincoln
- Teachers. Try to keep class sizes low.
- Any program that directly relates to the teaching of the children should NOT be cut. Why not look at some administrative areas that are duplicated rather than cutting teachers or programs that make us a better district.
- Classroom teachers, Gifted program (Explorers), music, art, P.E.
- Anything that will result in larger class size and specials. The decrease in PE, Music, and Art should not be an option. With our type of population, there is a strong need for these programs.
- Do not try to cut afterschool activities as before. It is half a drop in the bucket and no one will be fooled again. Anything else will be looked at by the community through the lens of what was done before. Hopefully everyone learned something and it's not how to manipulate better.
- see question 1
- I think Special educutions should be the last to be cut. The students who are placed out of district should be brought back to their home school. This will allow for more money for the district. It seems like the district is paying a lot of money for special education students to be privately placed when they could come back to their home school and save the district a lot of money.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- Cut basic teaching positions: Increase class sizes by 2 students per grade level moving up, target max at 24 in K, 26 in 1, 28 in 2, 30 in 3rd - 6th. 34 in 7 & 8.
- ELL positions should not be cut. We have an increasing ELL population that is now participating in ISAT testing and is being held responsible for ISAT AYP. With a growing ELL population it is becoming even more important to strengthen their skills to be successful in our schools.
- Any programs that directly touch students, including the special education program.
- Go to half day kindergarten.
- Do NOT cut the Explorers Enrichment program. It is essential that we allow the best & brightest to fulfill their potential -- which they will not do without special attention and instruction. When families move to an area, a program like Explorers is something they want to see in the schools. If we don't have it, they'll move to a neighboring district that does. That hurts our property values. And besides, the program is a bargain. It costs just one twentieth of what we spend on special needs kids (and I'm told it actually serves more students). Also, do not cut music.
- The arts, sports and other extra-curricular activities. This is what drives children to be artistic and look outside the basic skills set needed to communicate and thus succeed in an ever-changing world. Once the arts are cut it's hard to bring back those relations with the children and new teachers who are brought back into re-established programs. Long-term teachers in these arenas are needed to build relations not only with administrators and fellow teachers outside the realm of basic classes but relations with the parents of the children and building relations in the respective community.

3) What programs, positions or expenses should be the very last to cut? (Continued)

- Lincoln after school programs Teaching jobs, especially those that serve the entire population like music, art and PE NTDSE student payments - these children are well served by this program
officer Renderos Programs that encourage parent and community volunteers (these should be added where needed to make up for some things that must be cut) Technology - do NOT cut this, it is critical for our children's future Extra Duty Pay for things that would otherwise require another employee to be hired - possibly adding ""lead teacher"" positions to encourage teachers to support each other at the grade level or building level. This might be a way to fill in some of the gaps that will be left by cuts. (i.e. lead teacher to create gifted programming and share with other teachers)