

**District Accountability Committee  
Comments from 2017 Fall Budget Survey**

**Bond & Mill Levy Override**

Will the BOE be asking for MLO and Bond or one of the other? How will money be allocated to individual schools based on the results of this district wide survey if money is available in 2018/2019

We have been having much discussion on the bond issue and capital needs. However, we were not able to rank it as high as some would like because of other priorities.

The budget forecast based on student population for our school is reaching a critical stage. It is imperative to pass a bond and mill levy in the 2018 election to enable the district, and therefore the schools, to have enough money to run the school in the successful way it is currently running.

How are you going to inform the public about the financial needs of the school district so that if there was a mill levy or bond on a ballot they would know why it's important?

[Our] SAC supports adding dollars to both the Staff and SBB, as well as Capital Needs and Infrastructure, dollars by adding a Mill Levy Override and a Bond measure to the ballot in 2018.

It is understood that these are difficult decisions, our thoughts are to hopefully rank these in according to greatest positive long-term effects in the event we do not pass bond/levy.

We need to pass a bond and mil levy!!!

We will lose staff if we cannot pay competitively. Without a bond and MLO we will suffer as a community.

Regarding capital and infrastructure needs, we all considered these needs to be important and fundamental to providing an education; however, we acknowledged that these needs are so great and so critical that a bond and/or mil levy outside the district's current budget structure is sorely needed. In fact, it was difficult for us as a group to consider how these needs will be met without such an addition to our district pocketbook.

There must be both a Bond and ratcheting mil levy on the ballot to fix our funding issues!

The bond and mil levy override are imperative to pass next year!!!!

Please explore the possibility of a bond and MLO.

We need to pass funding!

## Capital and Infrastructure Repairs

We struggled with how to address Capital needs - our school is new and hasn't minimal capital needs at present, but we are well aware of the \$330 million district-wide needs and would like to see all the Tier 1 needs funded. We would also like to see Tier 2/3 maintenance projects done at the same time if by combining them at a certain school with a certain subcontractor the district could save \$ over doing them separately.

Based on our student population and online setting, we discussed what is of greater priority to our site and voted primarily on our priorities for our school. However, some of our votes were because of the impact to the district. For example, capital needs are not an issue at our site but we know it is a priority for the district as a whole.

## Charter Schools

We would like to see an analysis of how the cost of purchase services is determined. We'd like charter school administration more involved in budget issues that affect charter funding.

In addition, we would like to see the open enrollment window be extended so that we can plan accordingly with our budget. With all due respect there isn't a "need" for additional Charter schools in our area. Our community is "flooded" with Charter schools and the amount of funding allotted per pupil should be reduced.

We need a re-examination of boundaries. The district needs to be more aware of locations for new charters as this continues to pull enrollment from our neighborhood schools.

Concerns - Too many charter schools within throwing distance of a neighborhood school(s). The continuing approval of opening new charter schools by the BOE, when CART recommends not to open them and the impact it has on the surrounding neighborhood schools. Perhaps more careful consideration should be given when deciding to approve any new charters.

The survey isn't very applicable to Charter schools vs neighborhood schools.

The survey is hard to complete for a Charter School.

## Mental Health

We had a difficult time ranking these because we felt that a lot of the categories were inter-related. For instance, both mental health and capital needs can be considered part of the safety and security of our kids. Some of the things needed in our building that would have to be purchased under SBB in the current reality should rightly be under one of the other categories.

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Elementary schools do not have the budgets for mental health resources as middle and high schools.

When we rank-ordered these priorities, one of the important considerations was whether or not the priority item could be supplementally funded through school-specific parent-teacher organization's fundraising efforts. For example, Staff and Teacher Compensation cannot be supplemented by school-level fundraising efforts, while Technology and Site-Based Budget items can be. We also felt strongly as a group that mental health needs are significantly important to address/fund and, as discussed by our administrator, these needs have a growing trend. We also expressed that, when mental health needs are better addressed, this can lead – in and of itself – to improved safety and security for our schools.

Mental health prevention programming should be implemented starting in elementary school. A different model should be utilized for better, measurable results. Growth Mindset initiatives should be explored and added to the mental health approach as its own 'bucket'.

We are losing students because we don't have the proper mental health support.

We feel very strongly in our students mental and physical safety.

Full time mental health at every elementary building.

We need more prevention programs district wide and in our schools and stop reaction when our kids are in crisis.

## **Safety and Security**

Security is a major priority for us. We are isolated at our location and have a lot of state highway traffic that passes us. With the lack of complete and surrounding fencing and security camera visibility surrounding the buildings, we feel vulnerable. We hope this input helps with the budget process for Douglas County.

We believe student safety is a number 1 concern. We ranked it lower because we feel a good amount of funding and attention has been given to this issue in recent years.

All schools should have the driver's license scanning machines in the front office and working security cameras within and outside the buildings.

The physical safety of our students is critical.

We need to make sure our schools are secure.

## **Site Based Budget**

The parents of BRE have great concerns regarding the funds allocated to the school to pay for certified and professional/technical staff and the necessary educational programs. This year we are forced to raise funds to pay for a new 6-year math program. The parents/community have expressed concern that this expense is not covered by the district and issues surrounding each school having to choose their own programs.

We are also wondering why principals are forced to manage funds, curriculum, etc., when they are there to manage the educational piece and they are not money managers or have the hours to spend focusing on

choosing these programs at a high cost, when their time should be directed on managing the students educational needs.

Douglas County is struggling to compete with the salaries of neighboring districts. We are fortunate to be at a school with many experienced teachers and it our strong desire to keep them for their careers. It was discussed looking at the carryover from other schools and allowing a percentage to be used to support schools in need.

SBB should work to keep class sizes at an optimal level

We would like to see more resources used for special education -- the spectrum of support is geared towards the center while outlying kids could be better served by more specialized plans to meet their needs. Parents are fundraising on their own for specific equipment, with [our school] being a relevant example. Mild & moderate kids are also suffering after the 2011 budget cuts. They may not represent an immediate emergency but we are creating a long-term system that underserves these kids.

More funds need to be spent to where they will be spent on students NOT on marketing the district nor marking our school. More dollars into schools rather than into central admin. We need more autonomy for how money is spent within the school.

We appreciate the efforts we've seen that steps have been taken, but we want to know what more can be done to improve the support for schools who need it the most. The formulas are perhaps too cookie cutter. We should have to plead to receive funding for necessary positions such as a full time assistant principal.

We ranked SBB as #1 with the desire that this would lead to lower class ratios.

Stop expenses that do not directly affect students, such as promotional materials and products, the Apple Awards, and continue to minimize personnel that do not directly impact students and eliminate bonuses to employees who aren't directly working with students.

Larger SBB allows smaller schools to compete.

## **Staff and Teacher Compensation**

It is extremely important that we retain experienced teachers and adequately compensate them. The senior educators' salary should reflect the years of commitment to education and should be differentiated from the beginning/entry level teacher's salary. We need to retain our quality experienced educators and adjust their salary to reflect being a senior educator.

Our discussion focused on the real needs of staff and teachers to have increased salaries and should we have an infusion of funds, we think that should be directed to these salaries. Should the funds be minimal, we'd want it to go to SBB's to allow schools to use as their needs see fit. But we feel a real need to increase all staff salaries to be able to retain and hire outstanding school staff!!

Douglas County should be more competitive with other districts within the state on pay for teachers/staff

We are losing staff members to other districts because they aren't being compensated fairly. We are having to start cutting programs and staff which then cause a decline in enrollment which then means we continue to lose funding. It's a downward spiral.

Pay and benefits to attract and retain the best teaches is our top priority.

We ranked staff and teacher compensation as #2 with the hope that there would be extra compensation based on merit.

More money for teachers and school admin vs central administration.

We need to pay our teacher first and stop them from leaving our district.

### **Special Education Services**

Our school is in need of additional funding for SBB, SSN and SED. The increase in pupils with special needs have increased and the funding to support the children should be made a priority. This is a plea for additional funding so that we can meet the needs of our young generation.

Increased funding for gifted and special needs programs.

### **Transportation**

Increased pay for transportation is important to maintain bus routes and eliminate costly third party transportation solutions.

Transportation was also considered to be an important area of need, particularly at the middle and high school level (extra-curricular/athletic transportation), but was ranked lower than other priorities based on our overall assessment of relative need in the current context.

### **Miscellaneous**

Although some of the items above are a slightly higher priority than others at [our school], we believe that all of these items are very important. Thanks.

What is the expectation of conversation between feeders around budget? Where can we find more information on PERA?

Taking off some of the rules about vendors might allow for us to access resources at a better cost which will, in turn, save the school money.

Not every school is created equal and not every child's needs are created equal. We want to make sure that this prioritizing is not just a summary of data, but rather an honest look at school needs and how we might best meet those needs as well as the financial impact of the programs/building that have more significant needs than others.

Mentoring programs for teachers. Reduce school fees to ease the burden fees place on working families.

Miss Kane needs to take responsibility for the issues in the district. Regardless of the board, she has been hired to be a leader. She is not 'staff'. She is the leader of one of the largest school districts in the state and the problems that have been created as a result of mismanagement are her problems. Lead or resign.

The ranking [we used] is based on how we would prioritize our budget at the charter school - I realize district budgeting works differently, and the district overall may have different priorities. I believe money at the overall district level should be directed in the following priority order:

1. Infrastructure, until such a point in time that all safety/security issues are addressed.
2. Staff & teacher compensation
3. SBB
4. Technology
5. Mental Health
6. Transportation