



April 13, 2009

Stakeholder Budget Input Process: Overview & Analysis

Central Valley School District held a series of community and staff forums to share budget information and gather stakeholder input about spending priorities in March 2009. Following a structured process, forum participants were asked to share what they valued most about Central Valley schools by prioritizing a set of 12 spending categories and submitting written comments. Individuals unable to attend the forums were offered the option to complete an online feedback form, which was posted on the district website through April 6.

Using the “structured prioritization model” and spending categories approved by the School Board on February 23 and March 9 respectively, each forum followed the same agenda. Led by an outside facilitator, each forum began with a detailed “Budget 101” presentation by Jan Hutton, Executive Director of Finance. Participants then received the prioritization matrix and reviewed the definitions of the 12 spending categories before they worked individually to complete the prioritization matrix. Members of the district’s 35-member Budget Leadership Team were on hand during each forum to help facilitate the small group process. Participants were encouraged to note any additional suggestions, concerns and comments on their form.

Input Process: At a Glance

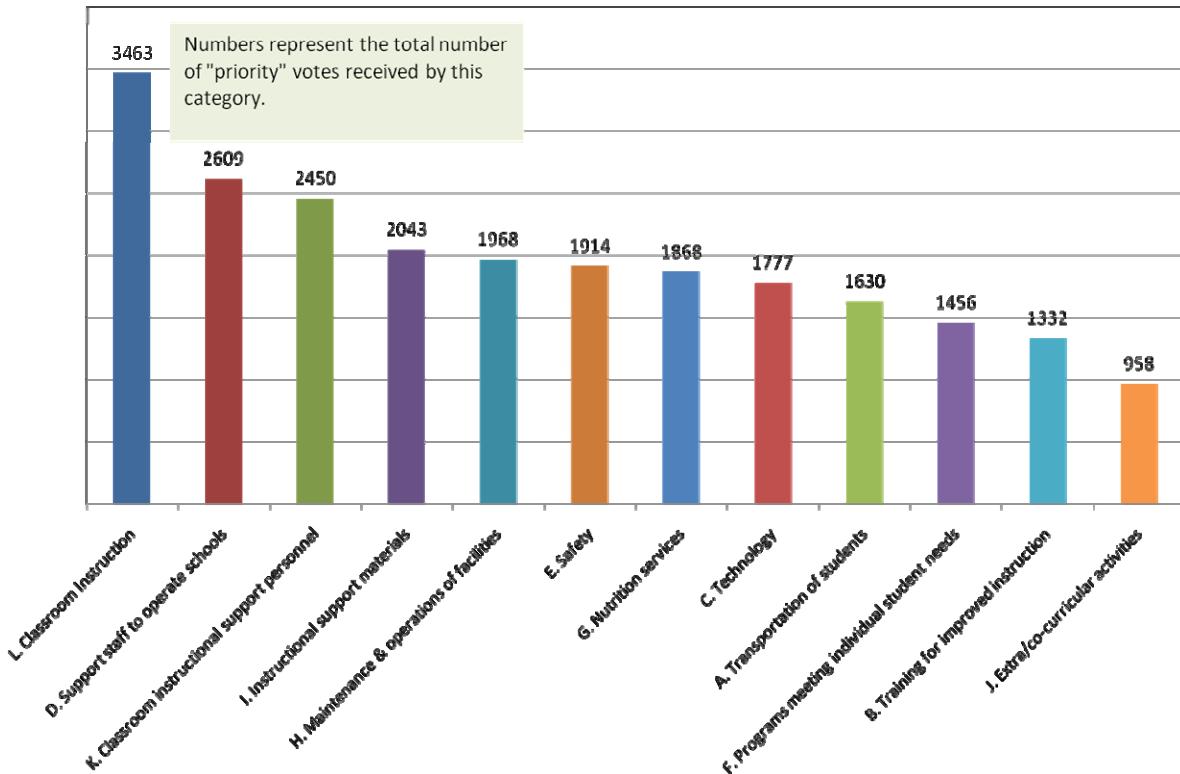
- **Community Forums:** Four evening forums were held on March 16, 24, 25 and 26 in schools across the district. The forums attracted 118 participants including parents, students, community members and staff. The opportunity for input was promoted in a variety of ways including news releases, newspaper advertising, district and school websites, school newsletters, school reader boards, a promotional flyer on school information tables and the district-wide *Focus* newsletter.
- **Staff Forums:** Three forums were held on March 18 and 19 especially for staff members. The times and locations were staggered to attract as many participants as possible. More than 251 staff participated in the forums which were specifically promoted through the *Inside Story* employee newsletter, *My CVSD* employee website and word of mouth. Employees were also given the option to attend the community forums, if they could not attend a staff forum. Although asked to attend just one forum, a small number of staff members attended more than one forum.
- **Structured Input:** A total of **369** “surveys” (prioritization matrix forms) were turned in by forum participants. Respondents included 176 parents/community members, 163 classified staff and 126 certificated staff. In addition, a total of **113** respondents completed the online feedback form including parents, community members and staff. The input (“raw data”) from all participants is included in this packet, as well as a detailed analysis of the 369 “surveys” completed through the forum process.
- **Additional Input:** Various stakeholder input has been received outside the structured process. This input is being made available to School Board members.

Analysis of Budget Input Process and Results

The data gathered through all 369 surveys was compiled, sorted and analyzed by Dr. Mary Jo Buckingham, Director of Special Programs. During a meeting on April 9, members of the Budget Leadership Team also reviewed and analyzed the results of the comments collected by forum participants. The results of the team's analysis are presented below.

Prioritization Results: At a Glance

Rank Order Summary of All Community & Staff Budget Meeting Participants
N = 369 participants (March 2009)



Budget Leadership Team Reflections on Results

- Value of classroom instruction is clear
- Use the results carefully and thoughtfully as a starting point to make tough budget decisions. Don't just go to the lowest priority and eliminate.
- Results were fairly consistent among all responding groups
- Compare stakeholder priorities to impact statements when developing budget reductions. Consider the number of students impacted by each spending category. The categories are more connected than they may appear.
- Results seem to show a disconnection between classroom instruction and the importance of training for improved instruction. The difference in rankings is wide. This may reflect a lack of understanding with how the two are connected or perhaps a happiness with status quo
- Results show a rich opportunity for communication to increase knowledge and address misunderstandings about how district operates and why.

Budget Leadership Team Reflections on Forums

- Participants said decisions were difficult (too hard); took process seriously
- Realization of the complexity of the budget
- Liked the process and chance to give input
- Heard support for classroom instruction
- Some lobbying in small groups
- Some misunderstanding regarding spending categories (eg: how deputies are funded)
- Child-centered decisions
- Operational efficiencies needed (eg: nutrition, transportation)
- Balance cuts across all spending categories
- Maintain level of service
- Liked Budget 101 presentation – “ah hah” moments
- Look at alternative ways to save money (eg: four day week)
- Collaboration was topic of conversation, concern
- Sense of fear among staff members for their jobs
- Straight across the board cuts to salaries
- Most participants held to personal agendas
- Vastness of trying to compare forced people to be more thoughtful about choices
- Can we go back to teachers supervising students at recess, lunch
- Started out to protect jobs but saw big picture
- Didn't like categories – too broad
- Safety a top priority for some

Budget Leadership Team Analysis of Comments: By Spending Category

Transportation of Students (67 comments)

Comments generally either supported charging students to ride activity busses or eliminating activity buses altogether.

- Reduce or eliminate field trips (14)
- Expand radius to one mile or increase (10+)
- Increase operational efficiency (size and use of buses) to fill with students (9)
- Cut out-of-district travel (4)
- Charge for extracurricular transportation; Students pay to ride to activities and/or field trips (3)
- Contract out transportation services (3)
- Cut activity runs (2)
- Eliminate collaboration (2)

Training for Improved Instruction (63 comments)

The major theme is elimination of collaboration time. Specific suggestions for reductions include: reduce staff development personnel and training and reduce out of district travel for training.

- Eliminate collaboration time (30) (90% from classified employees)
- Reduce or eliminate out-of-district travel for training (9)
- Questions about the costs related to staff development, collaboration (8)
- Reduce staff development (3)
- Reduce training for now (2)
- Increase training (2)
- Get rid of staff development days (2)

Technology (10 comments)

In general, comments supported the need to continue what we are currently doing in technology, as well as the need to run a technology levy.

- Stay the course with current technology (3)
- Run a technology levy/bond (2)

Support Staff to Operate Schools (59 comments)

The majority of comments dealt with administration at the LTC. However, there appears to be a lack of understanding in the roles of administrators and LTC staff in supporting schools.

- Reduce administration/LTC staff (25)
- Volunteers to do supervisory duties (3)
- Reorganize LTC staff (2)

Safety (25 comments)

No clear trend exists as comments were mixed between emphasizing the importance of safety in our schools, cutting the district's SRO staff, or adding to some safety staff positions.

- Safety is most important (6)
- Cut one SRO (6)
- Playground safety/more supervisors (2)
- Sheriff can do (2)
- Maintain as is (2)

Programs meeting individual student needs (60 comments)

Comments included a blend of suggestions and/or questions regarding the childcare program, tuition-based all day kindergarten, Able Learners Program, the SPACE program (housed at South Pines) and summer school. Eleven comments regarding the child care program ranged from program elimination to general questions about funding.

- Child care (11)
- Keep all day kindergarten (8)
- Eliminate all day kindergarten (7)
- Eliminate Able Learners (highly-capable)/SPACE (8)
- Summer school (4) (comments mostly regarding funding sources)

Nutrition Services (92 comments)

The majority of comments focused on either efficiencies in purchasing and operation of the department or increasing food quality (to "home cooked" food). Often these suggestions were included in the same comment. Other comments included raising meal fees, reducing waste and eliminating the summer nutrition program.

- Quality of food (23)
- Efficiency of nutrition services (variety of suggestions) (19)
- Raise fees (10)
- Reduce waste (8)
- Eliminate summer nutrition program (7)
- Improve the menu (4)
- Eliminate breakfast program (2)
- Prepare food from scratch (2)

Maintenance and Operations of Facilities (12 comments)

The suggestions to charge fees for community use of facilities will have the most direct impact on the budget.

- Custodians should be held accountable and do more maintenance work inside building (4)
- Community use of facilities eliminated or charge fees to cover costs (2)

Instructional Support Materials (33 comments)

Comments focused primarily on increasing efficiencies through better use of instructional materials and the suggestion to consider waiting on curriculum adoptions to save money.

- Increase efficiency through limiting waste of consumables or other materials purchases (15)
- Suspend or postpone new curriculum adoptions (6)
- Don't pass costs on to families (2)
- Keep materials up to date (2)

Extra/co-curricular activities (92 comments)

A majority of comments addressed a "pay to play" concept for extra/co-curricular activities. These concepts ranged from charging parents and outside groups for participation, charging for transportation, or charging for community use of district fields and facilities.

- Pay to play (37)
- Extracurricular extremely important (7)
- Charge outside groups (7)
- No activity bus; have parents pick up (7)
- Reduce sports if reducing music or fine arts (4)
- No middle school teams/sports (4)
- Reduce or eliminate extracurricular (3)
- If sports don't pay for themselves, cut (3)
- Middle school sports sponsored by outside organizations (3)
- Fundraise (3)
- Charge for transportation (2)
- No sports tournaments/travel (2)

Classroom instructional support personnel (52 comments)

In general, the emphasis of comments made regarding classroom instructional support personnel indicates the desire to keep the bulk of those staff IN the classroom.

- Eliminate or reduce certificated positions not in a classroom (instructional coaches, facilitators, I-728, Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA)) (13)
- Reduce administrators and/or their salaries (3)
- Keep teacher librarians (3)
- Eliminate elementary assistant principals and principal assistants (2)
- Keep principals; assistant principals; counselors (2)
- Reduce number of assistant principals at high school (2)
- Keep paraeducators (2)

Classroom instruction (43 comments)

This category is a high priority though the specific comments range from maintaining current class size to focusing on basics (reading, writing, math) and cutting electives. Specific suggestions for cuts include assigning secondary teacher librarians to the classroom, using virtual

classrooms, reducing the use of certified teachers outside the classroom and cutting administrative positions to preserve continuity in classrooms.

- Classroom instruction is #1 priority (6)
- Increase class size/reduce teachers (4)
- Maintain class size/keep teachers (3)
- Focus on basics (reading, writing, math); cut electives (3)
- Place secondary teacher librarians in classroom/staff libraries with assistants/secondary schools (MS & HS) share librarians (2)
- Teachers and paraeducators are the most important factor in learning (2)
- Need more rigorous physical fitness classes in all four years of high school (2)

Suggestions for Operational Efficiencies (33 comments)

- Make better use of technology staff time (efficiency)
- Utility cost savings
- Consider recycling programs
- Consistency across schools (eg: high schools have two different schedules)
- Make uniform budget and wage cut across all departments
- Departments should be responsible for their own budgets and held accountable

Suggestions Not Included in Analysis

A number of comments made by stakeholders are not included in the above analysis because they are outside budgetary control. Some ideas are contractually controlled (e.g. bumping, teacher salaries, teachers do supervisory duties, LID days) while others are legally required (e.g. homeless transportation, state assessments, special education). The analysis offered above is intended to present the variety of ideas which may be feasible for the School Board to consider.