

Financial & Staffing Plan Q&A

Topic	Question/Statement	Feedback / Response
Transparency		
	Can you post detailed agendas to BoardDocs?	The agendas that are currently posted are detailed and thorough. As stated below, presentations will be included on BoardDocs prior to a meeting when possible.
	Can you post presentations on BoardDocs prior to a Board of Education meeting?	When possible, presentations will be included on BoardDocs.
	Is it possible to conduct more surveys to collect parent feedback?	We conduct surveys several times throughout the year and will continue to do so when appropriate.
	Can you live stream Board of Education meetings?	Live streaming and video recording of Board meetings will be discussed at the March 11th Board of Education meeting.
Finances		
	Why doesn't the District apply for the National School Lunch Program when so many other local districts do?	When you apply and get approved, you are under very strict regulations. Many districts who have made this transition have actually seen a substantial reduction in "usership" of the food service program. The District could essentially lose money as a result of students not participating due to dietary restrictions and lack of choice

		<p>(i.e. a la carte menu items at the junior high level). With regard to applications for free and reduced lunch, we are able to review all applications. Under the NSLP regulations, this would be limited to a random sampling of 3% of applicants. As a result, the overall cost of waivers to families who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch who also receive fee waivers as a result would be offset by taxpayers who are already paying their fair share.</p>
	<p>Why did the District add a new Assistant Director of Curriculum position?</p>	<p>This position has been in existence for over 20 years and has been held by at least 7 individuals.</p>
	<p>Why did the previous Board of Education have \$60 million in reserves and now we are in a \$2.5 million deficit?</p>	<p>The District still holds approximately \$40 million in reserves. Board policy requires a fund balance be maintained of between 45-55% of days cash on hand. At the time, the District needed updates to several areas of curriculum, instruction, and facilities, so that money was spent down. The Board of Education at the time did not capture the levy while continuing to spend down funds on programs required by State and/or Federal regulations.</p>
	<p>The District loses \$400,000 in food service.</p>	<p>The dollar amount referenced here points to salaries and</p>

		<p>benefits of the District-hired lunch/playground supervisors. This is not an item that is included in our food service program, and the District actually saw a revenue of roughly \$85,000 in Fiscal Year 2018.</p>
	<p>Why doesn't the District apply for all of the grants that they could?</p>	<p>The District considers a number of different grants throughout the course of the year. Inherently, the District does not qualify for one or more of the following reasons: 1) the District is identified as a Tier IV property tax funded school district, meaning in the eyes of the state, District 135 is more than adequately funded; 2) the District's low socio-economic population is not large enough (under 20%); 3) the District, despite its size, is not within the Chicago city limits; and 4) while the District's diversity is changing and growing, its largest minority represented group is only 14% of the student population, well below the standard minimum of 20% on many grants. In addition any grants awarded would not be able to be used to offset operational costs.</p>
	<p>Over the last 3 years, the District failed to spend over \$900,000. A more aggressive</p>	<p>Currently, 5 out of our 10 schools are Title I schools. All 5 Title schools are known as "Targeted Assistance"</p>

	<p>approach should be put in place for spending.</p>	<p>schools. Within those Title I schools, funds can only be used to supplement, not supplant local funding. This means, Title funds cannot replace local funding and must be used “in addition to” local funds. Within the 5 schools that are Title I schools, funds may only be spent on “at-risk” populations and may not be spent on the entire school. In the last two years, the District has collected its carryover amounts and spent approximately 80% of its Title I project allotments. To spend more aggressively in the future, cite-based budgets are being created for Title schools and the Curriculum Office with work with the Principals in each of the Title schools to spend their allotments per school, which are not equal allotments. More information may be viewed by clicking here.</p>
<p>Staffing</p>		
	<p>Why does the District Office have a seemingly overloaded number of staff members (51)?</p>	<p>In 2017, District Office staff numbers were reduced by attrition, resulting in a cost savings of \$250,000. The Administration and Board are continuously evaluating staffing needs, and make changes when necessary and appropriate. Many of the 51 staff members are assigned to the district office as their primary building location to</p>

		provide them with a “home base,” as they work throughout the district. Examples of these roles include maintenance staff and instructional coaches.
	The District should maintain 10 media specialists.	The Board of Education voted to rescind the plan that reduced media specialist positions down to 5.0 full-time equivalent positions (FTE).
	The District should go through the traditional hiring process instead of appointing individuals.	The District has hiring practices and guidelines that are used in its process of posting, screening, interviewing, and hiring of candidates.
Programming		
	Cutting enrichment and honors programs creates a lack of motivation for students.	The Board of Education voted to rescind the plan that eliminated certain honors courses and modified enrichment services. This topic will be explored in an advisory committee to the Board made up of staff, parents, and community members.
	More students should be accepted into the honors program versus cutting these programs.	The district has a responsibility to appropriately place students into programs and provide services to students that best meet their academic needs. The district uses multifaceted data review in considering student placement into all special programs including English Language Learning, special

		education, enrichment, and honors courses.
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