

2024-25 Budget Survey Results Executive Summary

Robbinsdale Area Schools sent out three surveys seeking input about what the priorities for next year's budget should be: one to **families and community members**, another to **staff**, and a third to **high school students**. The survey was completed by 976 family and community members, 561 staff members, and 453 high school students.

The survey asked respondents to prioritize several curriculum-related areas. Family/community members and staff agreed the top three areas should be Literacy/Reading Achievement, Math Achievement, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM). The top three curriculum-related priorities of high school students completing the student survey were Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), College and Career Readiness, and Career and Technical Education.

When it comes to prioritizing support areas, once again family/community members and staff agreed on the top three priorities. Both groups prioritized additional staff for classroom support, school safety, and mental health support for students. Students indicated that school safety and mental health support for students were their top priorities.

Family/community members and staff agree that the two most important items to continue funding once COVID funds expire are staff that provide academic interventions and support and staff to provide mental health support/interventions for students. For their third priority, family/community members were split between security support staff and counselors. District staff clearly prioritized counselors as their third priority.

The top three areas for students were counselors, professional learning and planning time for teachers, and staff to provide mental health support/interventions for students. Security support staff and staff to provide academic interventions/supports came in close behind.

More than 80% of respondents from each group reported that extracurricular activities are either moderately or very important to fund.

Survey respondents were asked for specific suggestions on how the district should use funds to:

- support teachers as they work to enhance student learning
- support student academic achievement
- support the social emotional needs of students
- support student safety and
- if they had any other specific suggestions regarding the upcoming district budget.

Low class sizes and support staff were important. Providing better pay for staff was also important. We need to keep licensed staff that support mental health and, if possible, increase mental health support (both in-district and out-of-district). Providing calm spaces for students was also important. It was not uncommon for family/community members to prioritize the arts/music; many students cited the importance of extracurricular activities (athletic and non-athletic). Hispanic and Somali families indicated that language services, like the language line and interpreters, were important.

In regard to safety, there were three main themes: infrastructure needs, discipline, and staffing. Many infrastructure suggestions were made including screening systems, metal detectors, and cameras. Many survey respondents indicated that dangerous behavior on the part of students needed harsher and more consistent consequences. The desire for additional security staff was also important to many; however, there was no consensus on if that should or should not include School Resource Officers.

Generally, survey respondents commented about things that were important to keep. However, there seemed to be agreement across the three groups of survey respondents that the district should keep as many dollars as possible close to students – in classrooms. In other words, the district needs to look very closely at district level positions – cabinet members, directors, assistant directors, TOSAs, etc. – before making reductions to student facing positions.

Many additional and more specific suggestions are included in the Summary of Survey Results that follows.

Summary of Survey Results

Robbinsdale Area Schools sent out three surveys seeking input about what the priorities for next year’s budget should be: one to families and community members, another to staff, and a third to high school students.

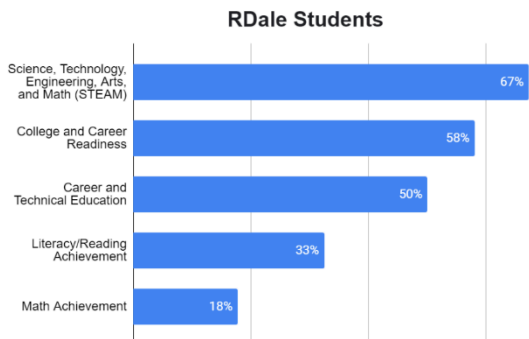
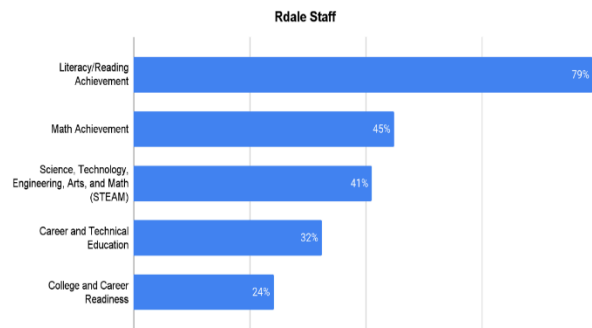
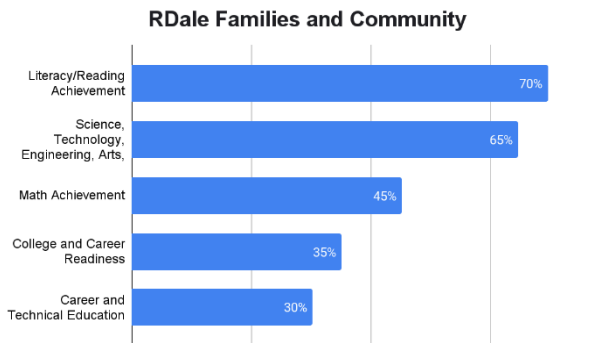
The family and community survey was completed by 976 respondents. Eighty-nine percent (872) of the respondents have a student in the district and ten percent (98) of respondents live within the district but do not have a student in district schools. Six respondents indicated that they neither live in the district nor have a student in the district. These respondents were directed to the end of the survey and did not complete any other items. Of the respondents who either had a student in the district or lived in the district, 76% (585 respondents) identified as white, 10% (74 respondents) identified as Black/African American/African, 6% (47 respondents) identified as multi-racial, 4% (30 respondents) identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 4% (28 respondents) identified as Asian, and 1% (9 respondents) identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native.

The district also gathered input from staff regarding priorities for next year’s budget. It was completed by 561 respondents. Seventy-six percent (423) of the respondents were licensed staff and 24% (134 respondents) were non-licensed staff.

High school students also had the opportunity to provide input on their priorities for the 2024-25 budget, 453 respondents completed the survey. Fifty-one percent (200) of the respondents identified as white, 15% (60 respondents) identified as Black/African American/African, 14% (57 respondents) identified as multi-racial, 11% (45 respondents) identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 5% (18 respondents) identified as Asian, 2% (9 respondents) identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1% (5 respondents) identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

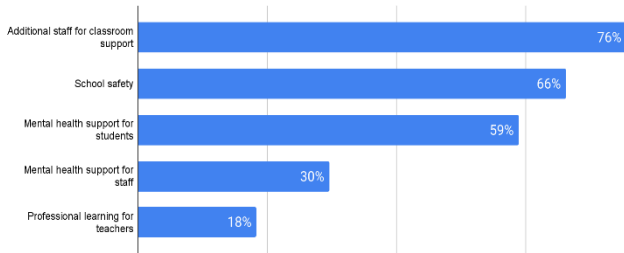
All three surveys asked respondents to indicate their priorities in three different areas, to say how important extracurricular activities are, and to provide specific suggestions in several areas. Results are listed below.

Question 1: Which of the following curriculum-related areas are the most important for the district to prioritize when determining how to use district funds for the 2024-25 school year? Select up to three.

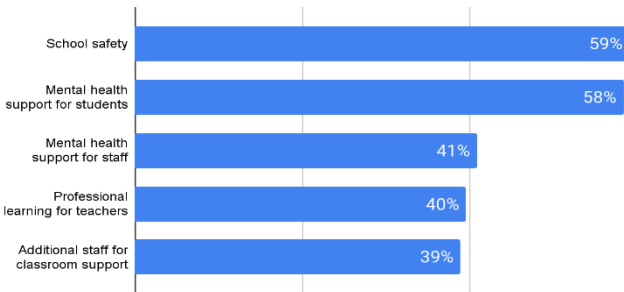


When it comes to curriculum-related areas, family/community members and staff agreed that Literacy/Reading Achievement, Math Achievement, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) should be the top three priorities (although their second and third choices are flipped). The top three curriculum-related priorities of high school students who completed the student survey were Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), College and Career Readiness, and Career and Technical Education.

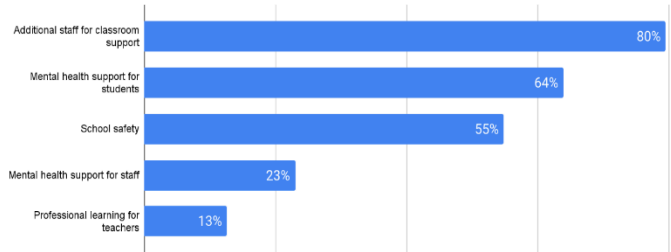
RDale Families & Community



RDale Students



RDale Staff



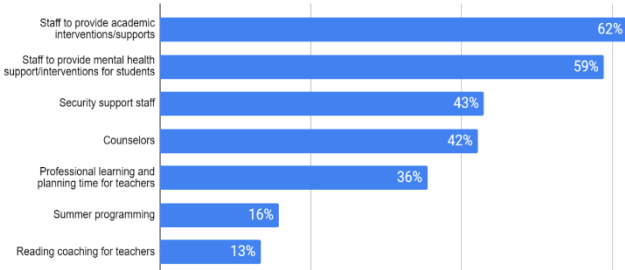
Which of the following support areas are the most important for the district to prioritize when determining how to use district funds for the 2024-25 school year? Select up to three.

When it comes to support areas, once again family/community members and staff agreed on what the top three priorities should be, just not the order. Both groups prioritized additional staff for classroom support (76-80%), school safety (64-66%), and mental health support for students (55-59%).

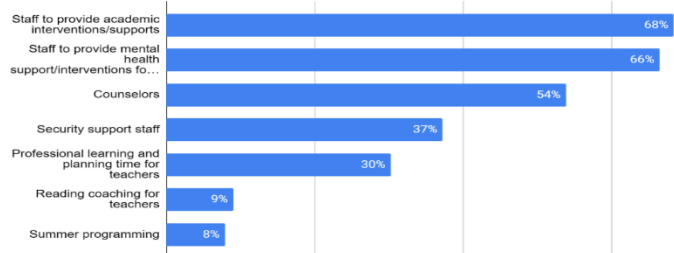
Nearly 60% of students indicated that school safety and mental health support for students were the top priorities. The other three areas – mental health support for staff, professional learning for teachers, and additional classroom support – were similar to each other, with approximately 40% of students indicating these areas were priorities.

With federal COVID funds expiring September 2024 and student enrollment declining, the district will need

RDale Families & Community



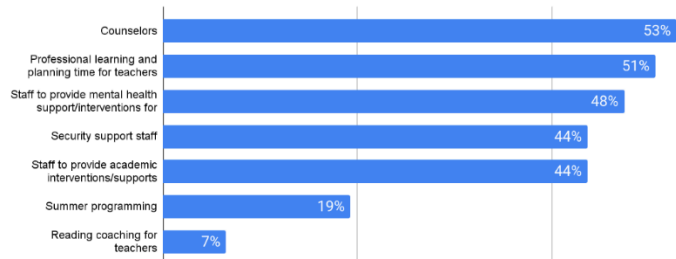
RDale Staff



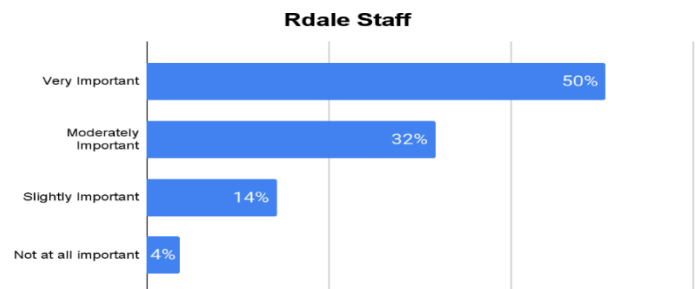
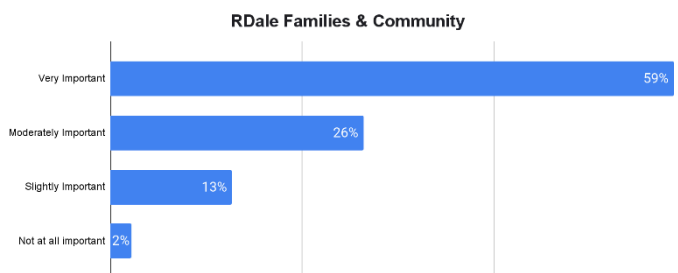
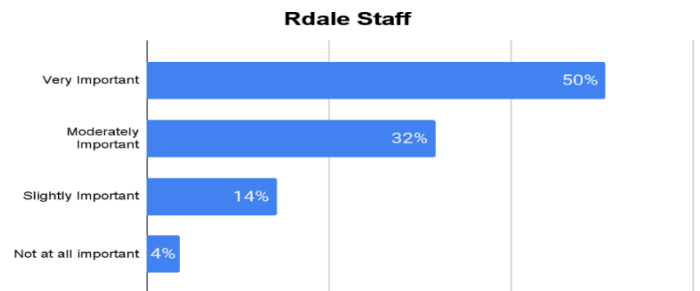
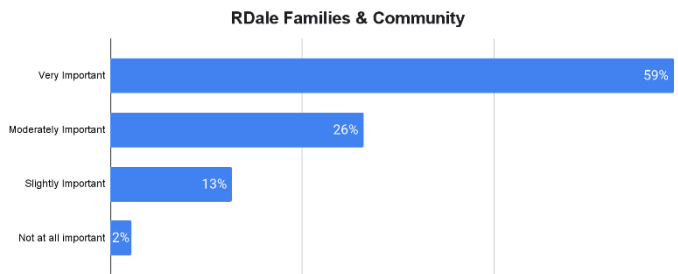
to make budget reductions. From the following list, which are the most important items to continue funding? Select up to three.

Family/community members and staff agree that the two most important items to continue funding once COVID funds expire are staff that provide academic interventions and support (62-68%) and staff to provide mental health support/interventions for students (59-66%). For their third priority, family/community members were split, with 43% prioritizing security support staff and 42% prioritizing counselors. District staff clearly prioritized counselors as their third priority, with 54% selecting this area as one of their top three and only 37% selecting security support staff.

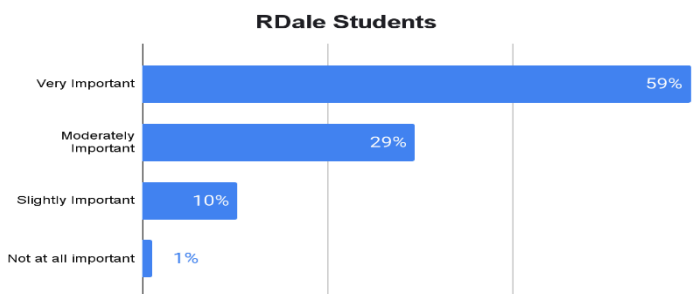
RDale Students



The top three areas for students were counselors (53%), professional learning and planning time for teachers (51%) and staff to provide mental health support/interventions for students (48%). Security support staff and staff to provide academic interventions/supports coming in close behind with 44% of students selecting these areas as one of their top three priorities.



How important is it for the district to provide funds for extracurricular (before or after school) programs (for example: arts, athletics, music, student clubs, etc.)?



Nearly 60% of family/community members and student respondents indicated that extracurricular programs were very important to them, with another 26-29% indicating that these activities have moderate importance. Half of district staff respondents felt these activities were very important, and another 32% indicated the activities have moderate importance. In other words, more than 80% of respondents from each group reported that extracurricular activities are either moderately or very important to fund.

The survey asked respondents for suggestions on how the district should use funds to best support teachers as they work to enhance student learning. Some of the themes that emerged from the parents and community members included working to keep the money spent closest to the students and teachers. Many felt that low class sizes were important, as was having educational assistants to help in the schools. Better pay for teachers and support staff was also important to parents and community members, as was providing support to handle discipline issues so that teachers could teach. There were a variety of teacher supports suggested, including planning time for teachers, more mental health support for students, and meaningful professional development (for example, for reading/phonics training and innovative teaching). There were also concerns over the lack of substitute teachers and its effects on learning.

Allow teachers to teach and have separate staff to deal with behavioral issues and discipline

Staff members (licensed and non-licensed) were also asked how the district should use funds to best support teachers as they work to

It is IMPERATIVE that teachers have smaller class sizes in order to meet the needs of all students.

enhance student learning. Many staff members stated that having smaller class sizes was important so they could meet the needs of their students. Pay for staff, in terms of both salary and benefits, was also a common theme. A number of reasons were given for increasing pay, including retention of good staff, attracting additional staff to the district, and paying staff what they are worth. There were also a variety of suggestions regarding additional support needed in the schools to enhance student learning: having Educational Assistants in every primary classroom, academic coaches in each building, and more staff in special education classrooms. Other staff noted that we need to at least maintain the number of staff in direct contact with students, and still others noted the need for counselors in every elementary school. Another common theme was to reduce staffing at the district level so those funds could be used for professional development, materials or additional staff who work directly with students. Additional planning time was another common request from staff. Several staff were concerned about how behavior issues are affecting learning, and others suggested focusing on just a few initiatives so improvement could be made in those areas. Some staff noted we may be able to save some money by keeping professional development in-house.

Students requested better teaching: making classes more engaging or providing different types of learning, better technology (wifi that works, technology that doesn't break during class, and classroom materials), providing science equipment and supplies so teachers don't need to buy them. A few requested smaller class sizes, prep time for teachers, support staff (counselors, nurses, security, etc.), and better pay for staff.

The survey also asked respondents for their suggestions on how the district should use funds to support student academic achievement. Once again, the theme of lowering class sizes so teachers can provide more personalized attention to their students came across. Parents and community members also mentioned that teaching reading (phonics, science of reading) and "the basics" (which included subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, history) was important. Continuing to have MTSS staff and structures was also mentioned often. A variety of supports was suggested, from having an EA (educational assistant) in every class all day, to having tutors before/after school, to higher-level learners needing support, and having targeted interventions taught by licensed teachers. Parents and community members suggested many other strategies for improving academic achievement: supporting teachers in flipping instruction/reducing lecture time, more project and experiential-based, hands-on learning, longer school day with added prep time for teachers, year-round schools. Some parents and community members expressed concerns regarding discipline and the need to hold students accountable for inappropriate behavior.

Lower class sizes so our teachers can know each of the students on a personal and academic level.

In general, staff felt strongly that low class sizes would be an ideal way to support student academic achievement. Additional support for the classroom, in one form or another – support for EL, special education, classrooms, behavior, hallway, MTSS/small group, individual, Tier 2 or Tier 3, before or after school – was another strong theme. As asked, staff provided specific suggestions regarding what curriculum, materials, interventions, and professional development would be most useful or how to improve each of these. There were also several requests for improvements in technology. Once again, as asked, staff provided specific suggestions regarding programming, from more STEAM and tech ed programs (in-house) to alternative classes/programming as well as several suggestions to stop providing IB classes.

Staffing! We need staff to support student learning! Teachers AND support staff

Student comments regarding supporting academic achievement included suggestions on improving teaching, better ways to teach math and English, making classes easier or more enjoyable, finding alternative ways to help students, and a request for more group work. Students also provided specific academic support suggestions, such as having tutors available, support centers, more targeted interventions for struggling students, after school help, and credit recovery. In addition, students had suggestions for courses, including requests for STEM options beyond engineering, technical learning opportunities, maintaining current college courses (EMT and CNA), financial literacy, and funding for higher level courses.

Survey respondents were asked to provide specific suggestions on how the district should use funds to support the social emotional needs of students. Many parents and community members stated that the district should either continue with current levels of staffing or increase the staffing for psychologists, elementary counselors, social workers and support staff. Survey respondents provided specific suggestions regarding how staff should use their time. Some examples include time for one-on-one, small group and whole class lessons led by school psychologists, counselors and/or social workers, and giving teachers the time and support to do check-ins with students. Some survey respondents indicated that a social-emotional learning curriculum was important while others stated that it was not the school's responsibility. Some parents noted how helpful in-school and other mental health services were for their students. The importance of staff development in this area was mentioned by survey respondents as

Counselors, social workers, and psychologists who are able to prioritize student contact time is vital.

were anti-bullying policies. Once again, parents and community members suggested a variety of strategies to support students with their social emotional needs, from spaces for meditation and yoga, restorative practices, and visits from emotional support animals, to internet security to limit student access to social media. Discipline and safety concerns were also expressed.

When it comes to the social emotional needs of students, the message from staff – that we need to keep, or increase, our licensed support staff like counselors, psychologists, social workers – came across loud and clear. The need to continue working with outside mental health supports, or even increase their availability, was also expressed by many. Staff also had specific suggestions around various SEL curricula that should be kept or that is needed. Additionally, there were suggestions that students need access to calm physical spaces, more opportunities to socialize – without cell phones, and that students need social groups and/or extracurricular activities to participate in. Of course, staff noted that low class sizes would allow teachers to build relationships with students and their families, which would help meet the social emotional needs of students. Some staff indicated that more consistent consequences for misbehavior would help all students feel safer. Others noted that working together with families and/or helping them become more involved would be helpful. Finally, it should be noted that a couple of staff stated a belief that the social emotional needs of students was the responsibility of parents, not the schools.

It is incredibly important to maintain counselor, social worker and school psych allocations. If schools do not have enough staff to support the emotional and behavioral needs of students, learning and academics will suffer

Suggestions from students regarding how to support their social emotional needs included the need for mental health staff – keeping or adding counselors, social workers, psychologists, or school-based therapists. Students also suggested improving awareness by making sure all students understand what support systems are available to them and making sure there is a no-judgment zone for students. In addition, students requested a calming space and calming activities (such as having a dog come to school or having anti-stress toys available). Others suggested training for teachers on how to support social emotional needs of students, or providing classroom support by modeling positive coping and emotion regulation strategies in the classroom, or simply having more staff genuinely want to talk with students about their feelings. A couple of students stated that they felt it was not the school's responsibility to deal with the mental health of students.

A space where students can go to get extra help or just be able to sit, focus, and complete their work without getting disrupted by others

Survey respondents were asked how to support student safety. Parents and community members felt that school safety was important to fund. There were a number of infrastructure suggestions made, including having screening systems in place at entrances, cameras, and metal detectors. Some suggestions around discipline included suspending/expelling students who are dangerous, and having zero tolerance for violence on school property. Survey respondent opinions were split on having officers in school. Some were adamantly against having any officers in

school, while others were steadfast in their opinion that armed officers were necessary. Other parents and community members noted the need for good security staff and procedures for entering schools. In addition, respondents noted the need for reducing bullying, providing curriculum around school safety, and proactively providing mental health services for and building relationships with students. Feelings about in-school drills were mixed; some felt we needed more drills and others felt these drills were taking a toll on students' mental health.

The main themes in responses from staff regarding safety revolve around discipline: ensuring there are clear consequences for disruptive and violent behavior, ensuring that there is adequate staff focused on safety – School Resource Officers and district security staff – and that infrastructure related to safety is either installed or, if existing, maintained properly. Infrastructure includes secure entrances, camera equipment, scanning systems, locked doors with alarms, and metal detectors. There were also a number of suggestions regarding safety procedures that could be implemented, such as backpack and locker checks, no backpack or clear backpack policies, and being stricter about who is allowed to enter the schools. Others pointed to the need for smaller class sizes, mental health support, working to create relationships and a sense of belonging, restorative practices, training of security staff, and training students and staff on basic security procedures. Other staff noted that they appreciated our current safety programs, such as Gaggle and Raptor.

We need to follow through when students misbehave and threaten/scare other students

Student suggestions around safety included installing metal detectors, having resource officers in the building, and more security staff. There were also comments about enforcing rules better and focusing on getting dangerous students away from others. Students also suggested additional de-escalation training for all staff and job-specific training for security staff. Students also requested that reports of dangerous behavior be taken more seriously and that we should provide students with safety training. Please note that the comments regarding having resource officers in the building were not universal; at least one student requested that we get rid of the police.

Finally, survey respondents were asked if they had any other specific suggestions regarding the upcoming district budget. There were requests from parents and community members to focus on academics, and others noting that safety was a priority. Many felt funding should stay close to students and administration should be reduced. Others were concerned about class sizes and staff pay. The arts, music and physical education were mentioned as important. There was disagreement regarding the importance of extracurricular activities, with some advocating for them and others claiming they benefit too few. A few respondents suggested closing open enrollment, and several noted the district should examine closing some buildings. There were requests for transparency

Treat your administrators and teachers like the hard-working professionals that they are. Pay them. Get them the best benefits. Praise them with sincerity. Provide the staff development that they WANT and need. Listen to them! Take whatever you can off of their plates, so that they can focus on students

Stop paying for professional development for the school board... No more out-of-state travel for board members to attend trainings out of state. Board needs to set an example.

and better communication, and a comment that the district has been great and the respondent would rather have a levy to keep current [funding] levels than deal with a reduction in the quality of education. Finally, there were several comments about the school board and its spending.

Staff were very clear that the district needs to keep as much funding as possible close to students. In other words, the district needs to look very closely at district level positions – cabinet level, directors, assistant directors, TOSAs, etc. – before making reductions to student-facing positions. Others pointed out that the district needs to look at eliminating unnecessary costs or redundancies. Many suggestions were provided, from Board level spending – mediation services for the board or Superintendent hiring consultants – to eliminating IB programming. A variety of

school/building closure options were provided by staff. Staff also made it clear that they are concerned about salaries for both licensed and non-licensed staff.

Many of the students who provided comments expressed their thoughts regarding extracurricular activities or the arts, mostly supporting continued use of funding for these activities. However, many of the comments regarding sports were requesting that the smaller programs be funded. Others were noting that non-athletic extracurriculars were also important to fund. A few students commented on prioritizing academics and the need for additional staffing (special ed support, nurses, janitors). A couple noted that the district could reduce administrative staffing or close a school. Most of the rest of the student comments revolved around items such as lunch (need better food, microwaves for students, or more time to eat), needing better chairs, new chromebooks, and more safety.

During the Hispanic Affinity Group, parents expressed that having Latino/Hispanic and Spanish speaking staff is important, as is a strong EL program and having mental health staff available. Parents also indicated that the Family and Community Engagement Team is an important resource for them. These staff provide guidance and support to families. Hispanic families expressed a preference to use district funding to keep class sizes low. Additional comments revolved around continuing to have access to technology and tech support, the need for staff to be more culturally responsive, and improving security so students can concentrate on academics. There was also a request for additional training for placement center staff so students can be properly placed in classes.

Less money spent at the district office on staff and more money spent on staff in the buildings

Parents at the Hispanic Affinity Group expressed that the district should examine transportation when looking for budget savings: look at which students need transportation, look for efficiencies in routing, examine the transportation app and if it is necessary, and possibly bring those services back in-district. The group also suggested that charging groups for use of district facilities could provide additional income. Parents expressed wanting their students to have access to all district services and concern over students losing services due to budget cuts.

When asked what should NOT be discontinued, parents indicated that district Language Services were very important to them and needed to be strengthened – more interpreters available at events and on the language line. The group also had suggestions for improving communications, such as having all schools send newsletters with translations available, and consolidating communications (Peach Jar flyers and district communications) into the school newsletter so they receive fewer separate communications. They also noted a need for EA staff and Latino community support. Finally, they made several suggestions around how to improve family-school engagement, such as more time at conferences to get to know teachers, EL family night events, more parent workshops, and a Latino parent committee where parents can share concerns and what is working well for their students.

Input from parents gathered during a Somali Affinity Group indicated that when it came to improving academic achievement, top priorities included providing a strong education for students, transportation, interpretation/translation services, and special education services. When asked about reductions to the budget, Somali parents at this meeting indicated that programs such as music, field trips, and programs that don't involve credits should be examined. Parents at this meeting questioned the root cause of declining enrollment rates. They all found the key solution was to increase enrollment, retain current students, and attract new students by prioritizing reductions in the student achievement gap. In addition, they said traditional education should continue.