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Criteria/Creative Solutions Feedback

Prepared for Evanston/Skokie School District 65

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SDRP III Community and Staff Engagement Sessions – Summary Report

(4/17/2025)

This report summarizes a thematic analysis of open-ended responses collected during District 65’s April Community and Staff Conversations and through Electronic Feedback Forms regarding potential school closures and consolidation criteria.

Stakeholder input is organized by the decision-making categories being suggested by administrative members of the Structural Deficit Reduction Plan (SDRP) Steering Committee: **Equity, Excellence, Effective Use of Resources: Finances, and Effective Use of Resources: Facilities.**

For each category, top-ranked criteria are highlighted based on sticker counts recorded during the “Community/Staff Conversation—Chart Paper” activity. The report also includes feedback on the perceived appropriateness of these categories, along with stakeholder-generated **creative solutions** that offer alternatives—or additions—to potential school closures/consolidations.

Contents

Equity Criteria.....	3
Top Criteria for Equity (Based on Sticker Count).....	4
Excellence Criteria.....	5
Top Criteria for Excellence (Based on Sticker Count).....	8
Effective Use of Resources: Finances.....	9
Top Criteria for Effective Uses of Resources: Finances (Based on Sticker Count).....	11
Effective Use of Resources: Facilities.....	12
Top Criteria for Effective Use of Resources: Facilities (Based on Sticker Count).....	13
Right Categories?.....	14
Creative Solutions.....	15
Housing and Community Development.....	15
Revenue-Generating Ideas.....	15
Repurposing School Buildings.....	16
Childcare and Early Learning Centers.....	17
Instructional Model Innovations.....	18

Equity Criteria

Equity-related responses focused on the need for the district to ensure fair access to resources, programs, and facilities across all neighborhoods and student populations. Many respondents emphasized that equity goes beyond equal treatment—it requires meeting students where they are, providing necessary supports, and ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Key themes included the importance of addressing diverse student needs (**Student Needs & Support Services**), maintaining proximity and accessibility to schools (**Accessibility & Proximity**), and equitably distributing high-quality facilities and programming across the district (**Geographic and Resource Distribution**). Percent frequencies showing how often each theme appeared in participants' Equity responses can be found on table 1.

Respondents also called for transparency and intentionality in how the district addresses historic inequalities and plans for the future.

Theme	Count	Percent
Student Needs & Support Services	82	68.3
Accessibility & School Proximity	29	24.2
Geographic and Resource Distribution	49	40.8

Table 1. Frequency of Key Themes in Equity-Related Responses. This table summarizes how often specific themes appeared in stakeholder feedback related to equity criteria. Several responses addressed multiple themes.

- 1) Student Needs & Support Services**—Respondents emphasized that equity means ensuring all students—particularly those with unique learning or life circumstances—have access to the resources and support they need. This includes special education services, mental health supports, and high-quality instruction across all schools.
 - *"Equity considers the specific needs or circumstances of a person or group and provides the types of resources needed for them to be successful. I would want D65 to provide enrichment opportunities to those who qualify and resources for the lowest performing students to help bring them to minimum competency."*
 - *"I feel that every student should take the Coding class that Lincoln students are taking. It will give a more learning platform for every student."*
 - *"The academic standards should be high and exacting for all kids, and those that need more help reaching them should have extra support."*
- 2) Accessibility & School Proximity**—Equity was discussed in relation to school accessibility. Responses emphasized the importance of maintaining neighborhood schools to ensure that students can safely attend school near their homes. Concerns included how school closures would impact transportation, walkability, and access to buildings and specialized programs.
 - *"Students across the district should have access to clean and healthy buildings regardless of where their home school is... I know parents have noticed the same. Criteria: Has the*

school been repainted recently? Has there been a mold and asbestos inspection? Is the district relying—or not utilizing—institutional knowledge from stakeholders in the area regarding schools?”

- *"Equal facility maintenance and amenities. High academic standards. Walkability... Anyone who loses their walkable elementary school should be eligible for a major reduction in their property taxes because it costs parents quite a bit... We would probably leave Evanston if we lose our walkable elementary school."*

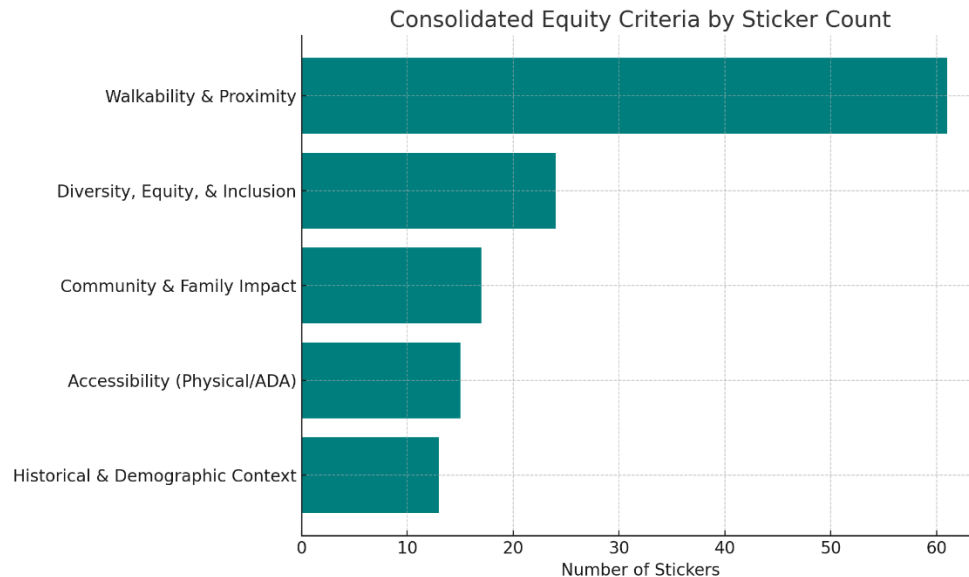
3) Geographic and Resource Distribution—A third theme focused on how district resources are distributed across neighborhoods. Many responses reflected concerns about neighborhood equity—ensuring all communities have access to high-quality, well-resourced schools regardless of zip code or school location.

- *"It may be necessary to close some TWI strands[...] When doing so, prioritize distribution of TWI programs where native Spanish speakers are most concentrated and/or geographically across the district... Students should not have to travel long distances to get to school."*
- *Ensure all non-magnet elementary students and ideally TWI students from a given school feed into the same middle school.*

Concerns about the impact of the new Foster School on geographic resource distribution were also raised.

- *"Stop building the 5th Ward school—the money doesn't exist and the process to approve and fund it has been flawed, incompetent, and possibly illegal. Pricing poorer families out of Evanston as housing costs and taxes go up goes against equity. Merely treating those who walk through the door equitably is not enough because many can't walk through the door because Evanston is becoming unaffordable."*

Top Criteria for Equity (Based on Sticker Count)



Excellence Criteria

Community responses to the *Excellence* criteria reflected a broad understanding of what constitutes a high-quality education. A major theme was the need for **Staff and Community Support**, with many respondents emphasizing the importance of hiring and retaining high-quality teachers, supporting student well-being, and ensuring schools have the resources to address diverse learning and behavioral needs.

Others focused on **Maintaining High Academic Standards**, calling for equitable access to rigorous instruction, inclusive learning environments, and meaningful opportunities for academic growth and enrichment.

A third prominent theme was **Curriculum and Classroom Quality**, which included calls for consistent access to instructional materials, specialized programs like TWI and accelerated learning, and equitable school facilities such as libraries, labs, and arts spaces.

Collectively, these themes point to a community vision of excellence that is both rigorous and inclusive, grounded in strong educator support and equitable opportunity.

Theme	Count	Percent
Curriculum and Classroom Quality	48	41.4
Staff & Community Support	53	45.7
Maintaining High Academic Standards	44	37.9

Table 2 Frequency of Key Themes in Excellence-Related Responses. This table summarizes the most common themes that emerged from stakeholder feedback related to academic excellence criteria. Several responses addressed multiple aspects of excellence, reflecting a broad and holistic view of what high-quality education entails.

1) Staff & Community Support—Responses under this theme emphasized the critical role that educators and school communities play in upholding academic excellence. Community members called for sustained investments in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, providing them with adequate classroom support, and ensuring manageable class sizes. Many also advocated for greater access to social workers, aides, and special education professionals to help meet students' diverse needs.

- *"More special education and social work resources available for kids with specific needs.*
- *"Supporting teachers and direct service providers, high quality programming and supporting academic growth of all students."*
- *"Reduce classroom use of technology... do not increase class sizes beyond 25; spend on paraprofessionals and supports to teachers; get kids reading whole books and not using reading curricula like is done at the MS level."*

Additionally, respondents highlighted the importance of fostering a sense of partnership and trust between families, school staff, and district leadership to create environments where students and educators can thrive.

- *"Ongoing commitment to quality critical-thinking curriculum... some teachers run in partnership with NU. Continuing highlighting of FAPEL, including SEAL and coding."*
- *"That you hire teachers, substitute teachers, parent volunteers from all different backgrounds... and you allow those getting teaching degrees to work at the school in support roles. This includes after school activities/partnerships—renting gyms to outside organizations that can provide arts/sports/cultural experiences."*

2) Curriculum & Classroom Quality—Respondents emphasized that a core component of educational excellence is ensuring all students have access to high-quality curriculum, engaging instruction, and well-resourced learning environments. Respondents advocated for consistent access to enrichment programs such as dual language (TWI), tutoring, and accelerated learning, as well as hands-on learning experiences in the arts, physical education, and science. There were also calls for schools across the district to be equitably equipped with modern instructional tools, technology, and classroom materials.

- *"Facilities should be safe for all children... Keep teachers in their specialty areas. Create a curriculum that intellectually engages and inspires learners from a young age. Support high quality relationships that support academic achievement as well as healthy social emotional development."*
- *"Ensure that all students still have access to current academic programming options and supports, including TWI, tutoring/academic skills center, and accelerated learning options. Ensure that all schools have similar technology and other equipment available to*

support student learning (e.g., computer lab, library equipment etc.). Ensure that all schools have adequate space and supplies/equipment for holistic learning, including gym, art, music, etc."

Additionally, individuals stressed the importance of culturally responsive education—including diverse instructional content, inclusive spaces, and classroom environments that affirm students' identities and reflect their cultural experiences. Holistic learning spaces like libraries, gyms, and art rooms were also seen as essential to fostering creativity, collaboration, and student well-being.

- *"I think a space that allows for a whole child and is adaptable. I would expect a library, cafeteria, gym, FA rooms, classrooms that are large enough and have the ability to adapt to learning needs. Electronic capabilities to fit the needs of future technology... and build up expectations for what high quality learning looks like."*
- *"Modern learning environments: Facilities should support 21st-century learning — flexible classrooms, maker spaces, outdoor learning areas, and strong technology access. Culturally responsive spaces: Artwork (interactive artwork stations), libraries, and classrooms should celebrate and affirm diverse cultures, languages, and histories. Support for the whole child: Buildings should prioritize spaces for mental health services, sensory rooms and shared learning spaces for neurodiverse learners, and communal areas that build relationships and social skills."*

3) Maintaining High Academic Standards—Respondents voiced a strong commitment to upholding **rigorous academic expectations** across all schools in the district. Respondents emphasized the need for consistent standards, high-quality instruction, and equitable access to enrichment and acceleration opportunities—regardless of a student's background or school assignment.

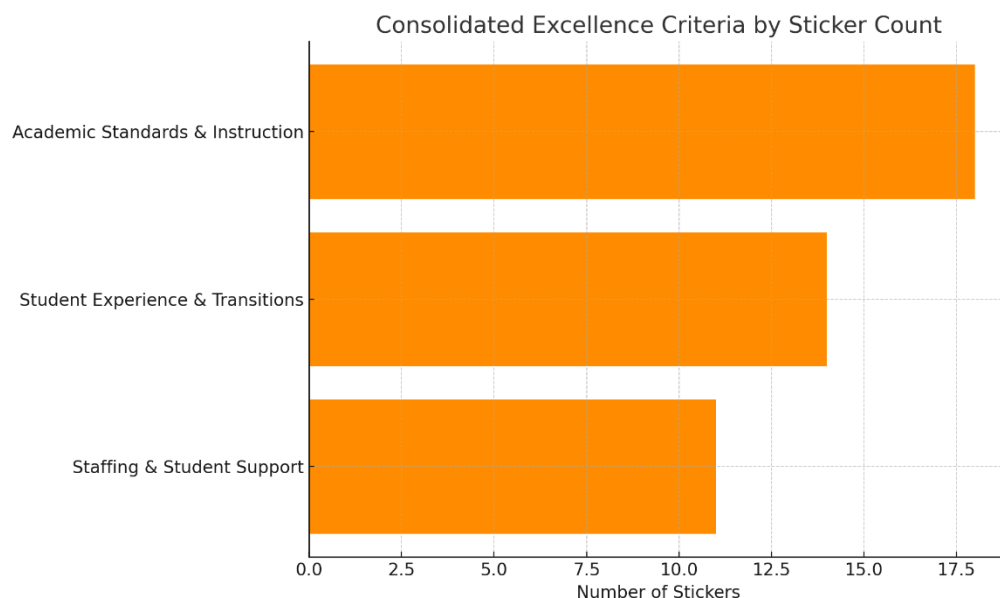
- *Every child deserves an opportunity to be challenged. [...] The best K-5 teachers know how to do this with stations and differentiated learning experiences, and the best 6-8 teachers know how to appropriately modify grade-level lesson plans to ensure they are accessible for students still working toward grade-level mastery and for students who are working beyond grade-level. Differentiated instruction is key, but the District does not hold all teachers accountable for delivering this, and often does not properly support teachers with the resources needed to do this. Ensuring that all schools have expert teacher leaders who can guide their less experienced colleagues is very important."*
- *"Don't sacrifice academic excellence and high achievement in any move, closure or consolidation. Keep as many teachers and interventionists as possible."*

Many expressed concerns that academic rigor had been diluted and urged the district to recommit to clear expectations, structured assessments, and instructional practices that challenge and support all learners. This theme also included calls to better identify and serve high-achieving

students, reintroduce honors and acceleration programs, and ensure that all students are prepared for future academic and career success.

- *"Bring back real grades; exact high standards; don't change curriculum every year; less use of technology; have more honors options; get the kids who need the most help to the highest level instead of padding grades and curriculum to pretend they're already there."*
- *"The ability for students to move to more challenging math classes without having to lobby the district and often times get rejected. Many kids need more challenge than the current curriculum offers, but it's nearly impossible for them to access this within D65's current rules."*
- *"Reintroduce acceleration and honors programs. Identify the best and brightest and set them up for the most success. Make sure the laggards can read, write, calculate and process at grade appropriate levels."*

Top Criteria for Excellence (Based on Sticker Count)



Effective Use of Resources: Finances

Key themes emphasized the need for strategic, transparent, and community-centered decision-making around the district's finances. Many participants urged the district to prioritize long-term sustainability by evaluating the cost-effectiveness of school facilities, administrative overhead, and new construction projects.

There was widespread concern about spending on non-instructional initiatives—such as district office expansion or the construction of new schools—without clear evidence of need or return on investment. Instead, respondents advocated for smarter use of existing buildings, targeted investments in instructional support, and fiscal strategies that protect student-facing programs.

Across responses, there was a clear desire for financial decisions to reflect community values and educational priorities, ensuring that every dollar spent contributes meaningfully to student learning and well-being.

Theme	Count	Percent
Cost-Effective & Spending Accountability	64	52.5
Opposition to New Construction	43	35.2
Use of Existing Facilities	13	10.7

Table 3 Frequency of Key Themes in Financial Resource Feedback. This table summarizes the most common themes expressed in community responses regarding the effective use of financial resources.

1) Cost-Effectiveness & Spending Accountability—The most frequently cited theme emphasized the importance of long-term financial sustainability and urged the district to be transparent and strategic about how funds are allocated. Suggested strategies included:

- *“Comparison of the market value of a school property on the commercial rental or sale market, compared to the operating costs and deferred maintenance needs of the school. Secondly, consider the impact on pupil travel to school, with specific emphasis to avoiding the need to cross major thoroughfares like McCormick.”*
- *“[Consider] The current costs to run each school building, what short- and long-term building and ground improvements need to happen, how will classrooms become equipped to handle the increased class sizes and student needs?”*

Concerns were raised about closing schools without fully understanding the cost-benefit tradeoffs—particularly regarding building maintenance, future enrollment trends, and potential resale or repurposing value.

- *“What is needed here are specifics about what you mean. Are we concerned about costs, liabilities, or income? Are you closing schools that have the highest value to the district in terms of potential for sale? Are you closing schools that need the most repair to remain*

open?... Please DON'T fall into the trap of saying, 'Numbers are low at this school, so let's close it.' Please re-think facility use broadly."

Many respondents asked the district to avoid short-term, reactive decisions and instead pursue creative, community-informed solutions that preserve flexibility and minimize financial waste. Calls to reduce administrative overhead and reevaluate capital investments also surfaced, reflecting a shared desire for responsible stewardship of public resources.

- *"Generally, I hope that you will be guided by creative thinking that allows the district flexibility to adapt in the future—not short-term reactive fixes... Can space be shared with other uses to generate income? Can we keep portions of buildings open for all schools but share administration to reduce costs?"*
- *Closing schools should truly be a last resort. We need to exhaust all other savings by reducing administration, busing or other costs... That is just one example of optional costs that must be gone BEFORE discussing closing any school."*

Building Age and Maintenance Costs—Respondents consistently raised concerns about the costs associated with maintaining and upgrading school facilities. Many responses questioned whether it made financial sense to keep aging buildings open given the burden of deferred maintenance and the capital investments required to ensure safety, accessibility, and modern learning environments.

At the same time, some respondents urged the district to weigh the long-term value of its existing properties and to explore renovation or partial use strategies instead of full closure. Comments also highlighted the importance of transparency around facility condition assessments and capital planning, with some calling for clear comparisons of repair costs versus potential sale or redevelopment value.

- *"We need to add capital allocations to the budget. It should not be a separate thing. If we have \$200M in capital expenses, we need to start budgeting \$20–30M/year to get the facilities back up to speed. With each year of deferred maintenance, the numbers only go up more quickly. I do realize this money will come at the expense of something else, but without a place for the kids to go, even the best programming doesn't work."*
- *"While we understand closure of a sixth ward school is likely given the construction of the fifth ward school, we think that this decision should be based on cost of maintenance/repair to existing schools and the goal of having a walkable elementary school available for all students in our neighborhood."*

Long-Term Enrollment and Planning— Many respondents emphasized the importance of strategic, long-term planning when making decisions about school closures and resource allocation. Rather than relying solely on current enrollment numbers, respondents urged the

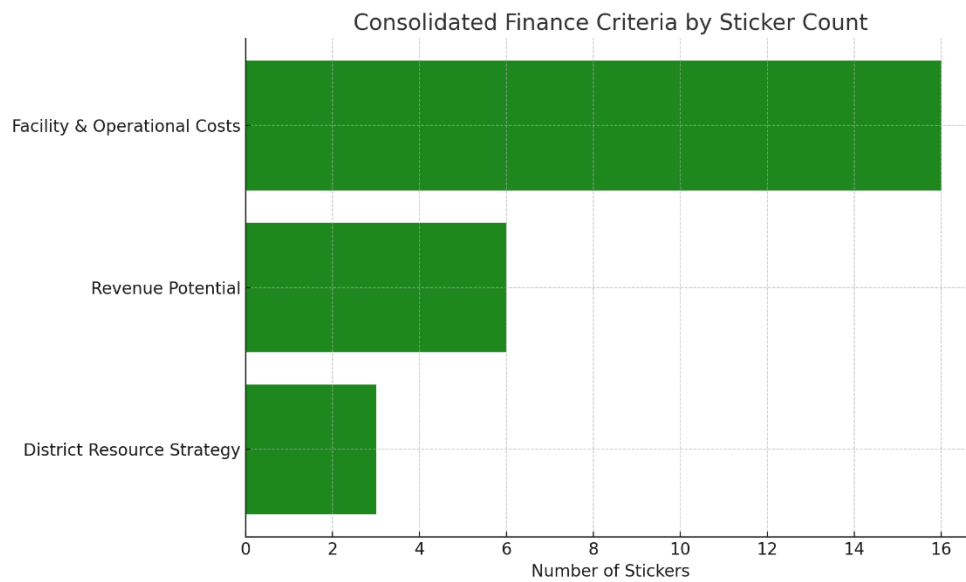
district to consider future demographic shifts, housing development trends, and the potential for enrollment growth in historically under-enrolled neighborhoods.

- *"Budget for social stability for current students... Be cognizant of going beyond simple geography to see the population density of children likely to attend a neighborhood school during the relevant period, so we are also making a long-term plan to accommodate students and programs to minimize the risk of having to do more moves in the future."*

There was a clear call for the district to align facility decisions with projected student populations and evolving community needs—ensuring that short-term solutions do not compromise future flexibility. Some responses also highlighted the value of retaining properties or repurposing facilities to adapt to changing enrollment patterns over time, rather than pursuing permanent closures based on temporary declines. This theme reflects a desire for district leaders to plan proactively and equitably, balancing current realities with a clear vision for the future.

- *The decision to consolidate or close a school should be made independent of any decision to sell District property; they are separate issues that need to be decided on different timelines, and conflating these issues could hinder the Board's effort to explore creative and potentially lucrative alternative uses for District properties. Finally, because demographic cycles tend to repeat themselves and the District land is not going anywhere, think long-term when considering the sale of District properties."*
- *"Long-term enrollment trends: Decisions should be based on data showing consistent enrollment decline over multiple years — not just short-term shifts... Facility condition and maintenance costs: Prioritize keeping open the facilities that are structurally sound and efficient to maintain."*

Top Criteria for Effective Use of Resources: Finances (Based on Sticker Count)



Effective Use of Resources: Facilities

Overall, the themes outlined here reflect a desire for **smart, data-informed use of school buildings** that balances current needs with flexibility for the future. Key themes emphasized the importance of aligning school space and capacity with current and projected student enrollment.

Theme	Count	Percent
Efficient Use of Space & Population	20	18.3
Long-Term Sustainability & Flexibility	15	13.8

Efficient Use of Space & Population— Many respondents highlighted the importance of aligning school building capacity with actual enrollment. Responses noted that some schools are significantly underutilized while others face overcrowding, resulting in inefficient use of district resources.

Many called for the district to maximize the use of existing space by consolidating programs, reducing excess capacity, and exploring multi-use or co-located facility models. This theme emphasizes the need for **data-informed facility planning** to ensure that every square foot of school space serves students effectively.

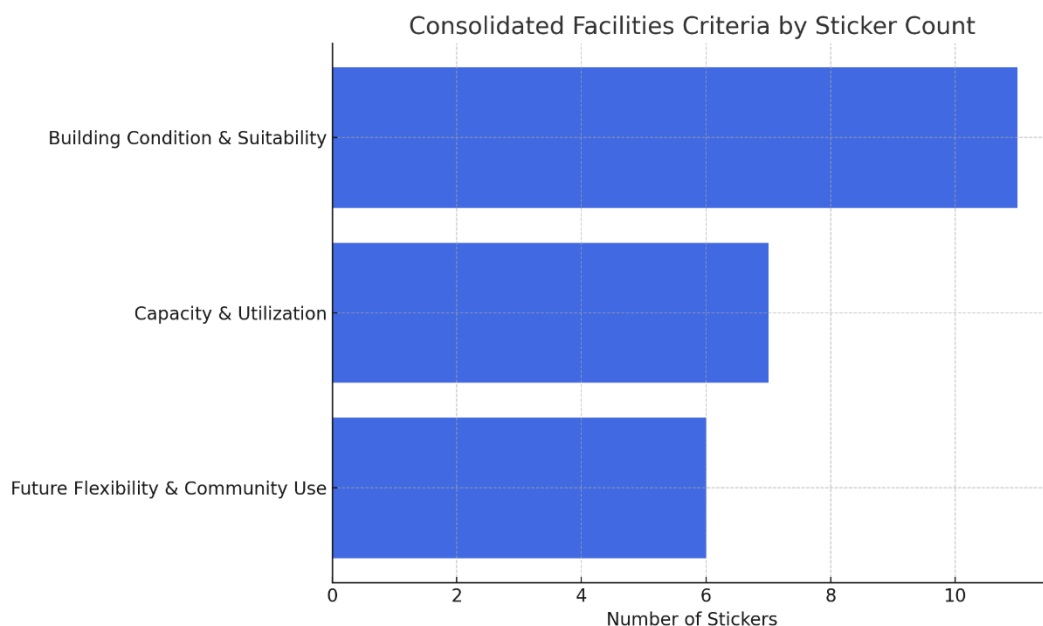
- *"Prioritize schools (if any) with the capacity to consolidate grade levels on the lowest cost per pupil basis."*
- *"Consolidation of middle schools to create K–8 facilities. Buildings that support the expansion of Pre-K. Pre-K is the future!"*
- *"Since the District has shown a commitment to walkable neighborhood schools, it seems like magnet schools should be considered for consolidation/closing before any neighborhood schools. Magnet programs could be moved into neighborhood school buildings if buildings are not at capacity. Other District programming could also be moved to neighborhood schools to maintain these important learning communities."*
- *"We have dual language strands spread out among way too many elementary schools in the district. Taking a page from district 112, I believe we should consolidate TWI programming into two elementary schools in the district—one on the north side, one on the south side. If need be, those schools could function as wall-to-wall TWI schools."*

Long-Term Sustainability & Flexibility—Some respondents urged the district to avoid short-sighted decisions that may limit future options. Instead of permanently closing schools based on current enrollment trends, respondents advocated for strategies that preserve facilities for potential future use—such as leasing, partial use, or repurposing buildings.

This theme reflects a forward-thinking mindset that values **adaptive reuse and strategic preservation**, recognizing that demographic shifts and educational needs evolve over time. Long-term flexibility was framed as essential for minimizing disruption, preserving community assets, and allowing the district to respond effectively to future growth or changing priorities.

- *"Trends and Projections: Use demographic data and enrollment forecasts to assess whether declines are temporary or long-term... Sustainability: Prioritize actions that strengthen the district's long-term viability while improving equity and educational quality."*
- *"I encourage you to please think about criteria beyond current enrollment numbers... Focus on facility quality, facility flexibility (adaptability of the facility to evolve over time), facility value to the neighborhood and community... and potential co-uses (how can space be used creatively to save money while minimizing disruption to families and communities who rely on the neighborhood schools)."*

Top Criteria for Effective Use of Resources: Facilities (Based on Sticker Count)



Right Categories?

District leaders asked respondents, on the electronic survey, whether they believed the above were the right criteria to inform potential school closure/consolidation. Additionally, participants were asked to assign criteria to categories on the chart paper or identify new categories during the in-person sessions. These were captured in the meeting summaries. Electronic responses were categorized into one of the following:

- Yes (i.e., respondents feel these are the right criteria)
- No (i.e., respondents feel these are not the right criteria)
- Unsure (i.e., respondents were unsure or expressed a nuanced perspective about criteria)
- Other (i.e., recondenses that did not fit into these above categories)

Community Feedback Sentiment on 'Right Categories?'

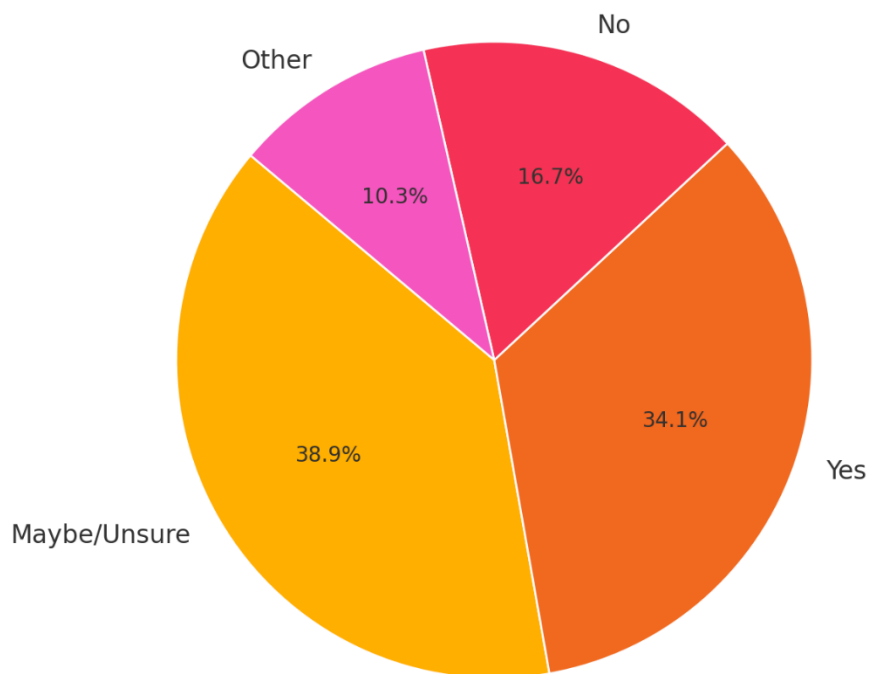


Figure 1. Percentage of responses in each category (based on 126 total responses).

Creative Solutions

Participants at in-person session and respondents to the online survey were asked to share alternative/creative ideas and solutions for the district to consider as they look to close the budget deficit. These are in addition to or as an alternative to potential school closures/consolidations. An overview and frequency analysis of the most popular themes can be found in Table 4. Example quotes for each theme were pulled directly from responses.

Table 4. Thematic Analysis: Creative Solutions

Theme	% of Responses Tagged
 Housing and Community Development	42.1%
 Revenue-Generating Ideas	34.3%
 Repurposing School Buildings	30.7%
 Childcare and Early Learning	21.4%
 Cost Reduction Suggestions	17.9%
 Instructional Model Innovations	13.5%

Note: Some responses were tagged with more than one theme, so totals exceed 100%.

Housing and Community Development

Appeared in over 40% of *Creative Solutions* responses and reflects a strong interest in aligning school facility decisions with broader neighborhood revitalization goals. Respondents proposed using district-owned land for affordable housing development to attract and retain families in the district. This approach was framed not only as a solution to declining enrollment but also as an opportunity to reinvest in Evanston's communities by addressing housing access, strengthening neighborhood stability, and ultimately supporting school sustainability through population growth.

- *"Fundraising and increasing revenues like the City did to build Robert Crown and D202 did for their new wing... Look to raise fees across the board (and continue to offer financial assistance when needed)."*
- *"Selling plots of land to build housing for families; doing so would also increase the number of families available to enroll in the district."*

Responses also highlighted historical inequities that should be considered should the district use this opportunity to reinvest in neighborhood and community revitalization and suggest stronger partnerships with anchor institutions (e.g., Northwestern) to support local revitalization.

- *"I think the district needs to ask more of Northwestern, which doesn't pay property tax and could contribute more to the education of the community it resides in."*
- *"Equitable financial support of schools based upon racial mix... With largely white schools in North, the lion's share of these funds would properly end up in the south."*

Revenue-Generating Ideas

Revenue-generating ideas were shared in over a third of all *Creative Solutions* responses, centered on ways the district could generate income through strategic use of its existing assets rather than closing or selling school properties outright. These ideas reflect a pragmatic and resourceful mindset among respondents, emphasizing sustainability and long-term investment over short-term cost-cutting. Respondents proposed leasing school spaces to community organizations, early childhood providers, and after-school programs, as well as renting facilities for evening or weekend use.

- *“Consider how to use district resources, such as school buildings, as a source of income, e.g., leasing out spaces to other community orgs, early childhood programs, etc.”*
- *“Neighborhood schools could be rented out for private evening, weekend, or summer programming or camps.”*

Others suggested seeking partnerships with local businesses, launching fundraising campaigns, or exploring referenda as ways to bolster district finances.

- *“See if local businesses will donate services needed to repair run-down facilities.”*
- *“I would also consider not selling the building that will be closed immediately. There might be leases to community organizations, the city, etc., that could be explored to continue to use the building as a possible resource or investment.”*

Open enrollment was also framed as a revenue generating idea that would provide parents with school choice while generating money for the district.

- *“Allowing open enrollment and allowing parents to apply to school of their choice—if it’s not in their boundary, they can pay a small fee to attend school of choice.”*

Repurposing School Buildings

Thirty percent of responses expressed strong interest in keeping school properties within district control and ownership. These responses were often driven by concerns that selling buildings now would limit the district’s capacity to support future enrollment growth. Instead of selling, respondents advocated for retaining properties and repurposing them to meet evolving community needs—such as leasing space for early childhood programs, community centers, or summer camps. Repurposing was also proposed as a strategy to generate revenue while maintaining public stewardship of district assets, aligning with a broader commitment to community-centered planning.

- *“Rent out district facilities; partner with community theaters, summer camps, etc. to host their activities and garner revenue.”*
- *“Repurpose buildings such as open Early Childhood/Childcare center or rent the space to childcare providers such as Kinder Care, Bright Horizons, or Goddard School.”*

- *“Open every building for summer camp revenue (i.e. Willard used to host camp inside the building, then that has not been allowed in almost 10 years). Do not sell property, lease it out.”*
- *“Transform parts of school buildings into community centers, co-working spaces, or incubators for local entrepreneurs... Partner with the city and university to fill vacant commercial spaces with education related ventures—such as early childhood centers, tutoring hubs, or special needs facilities...”*

Childcare and Early Learning Centers

Appeared in 21.4% of responses, highlighting the communities’ support for using school facilities to expand access to early childhood education and childcare services. Many respondents proposed repurposing closed or underutilized buildings to house preschool programs, infant and toddler care, or partnerships with private providers such as Bright Horizons or KinderCare. These ideas were seen as both a practical solution to meet the needs of working families and a strategic investment in attracting and retaining families within the district. Several responses also noted the potential for onsite childcare to support district staff and offer learning opportunities for older students interested in education or service roles.

- *“If schools must be closed, retaining the buildings and creating top-notch preschool options at these buildings to both grow the attractiveness of the district and retain the properties should enrollment rebound”*
- *“Could you lease parts of an underutilized school like Orrington to a private preschool, for instance?”*
- *“Could schools be rented out to childcare providers? This could be beneficial for staff with infants and young children by offering another childcare option that would be convenient.”*
- *“Creating top-notch preschool options at these buildings to grow the attractiveness of the district.”*

Cost Reduction Suggestions: As many as 17.9% of responses proposed that the district reduces other spending streams before resorting to school closures or property sales. Examples included focusing on cutting administrative costs, limiting technology-related expenses, and improving energy efficiency. Several participants called for reallocating funds toward student services and school maintenance rather than new infrastructure.

- *“Cut more expenses at central administration of District 65; District 65 still has too many staff employees rather than teachers.”*
- *“Maintain closed schools for community centers. Segment schools to close portions of them. Use energy as a service approach to cut HVAC and lighting costs.”*
- *“Redrawing the enrollment map so that every child can walk to a school close to their home would be a good place to start. The buildings already exist. Perhaps they need updating, and money should be allocated for this rather than new builds.”*
- *“Get rid of the 1-1 technology to save money. Keep the older school buildings open.”*

- *“Do all K/1 students require 1-1 iPads? How are subscriptions being used? Are all of them necessary?”*

Instructional Model Innovations

Some responses (13.5%) made calls to rethink traditional grade configurations to improve resource use, educational outcomes, and neighborhood cohesion. Respondents suggested transitioning from the current elementary–middle school split to models such as K–8 schools or K–2 / 3–5 grade spans. These alternative configurations were seen as opportunities to reduce transitions for students, better target instructional resources, and preserve walkable, neighborhood-based schooling. In some cases, innovative models were also linked to cost savings through shared staffing, staggered schedules, or more efficient building utilization.

- *“Including Pre-school in a larger combined school building and potentially looking at K-8 buildings.”*
- *“Have we ever considered K-2, 3-5 schools? Or other alternative configurations that may allow for more focused interventions and expertise in one building?”*
- *“Could there be K-2 and 3-5 schools? That way specific resources would not need to be shared across all buildings.”*
- *“Alternative funding sources should be considered including private donations. I also believe some of the elementary schools with extra capacity should be considered to be converted to K-8 schools, and consideration given to closing middle schools. This can help preserve walkability / neighborhood schools.”*

A number of responses emphasized the potential for system-level reforms—including district consolidation and creative grade-span models—to streamline resources and foster collaboration.

- "Consolidation of D65/D202 to reduce costs"
- "Creation of sister schools in Glenview (creation of grade centers, e.g., K–2; 3–5) with teams of teachers that helped increase student support, collaboration"

There was also interest in revitalizing specialized academic programs such as Two-Way Immersion (TWI) and implementing evidence-based curricula to boost student achievement and attract families back to the district.

- "I think expansion of specialized programs like two-way immersion, increasing academic performance through evidence-based curriculum, re-emphasis of core subjects to improve standardized test scores... should be central to an alternative plan."
- "Think broadly about magnet programs and difficulties when there is only a single strand (e.g., only one strand of TWI within a building)"
- “TWI and ACC programs could have better marketing to bring more families in; better communication about the programs offered”

Collectively, these responses reflect an appetite for forward-thinking, equity-driven reforms that both improve educational quality and respond to changing enrollment patterns.