

MAY 2010 LONG-TERM BUDGET LISTENING & FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Elmbrook Schools held five Long-term Budget Solutions Listening & Feedback Sessions in May 2010. Approximately 140 individuals (community members, parents, staff, students) attended the sessions.

Sessions began with an introduction and overview of Elmbrook's financial planning process. Attendees then participated in small group discussions on 2011-12 and beyond budget study recommendations. An elementary group discussed multi-age programming and a charter school; a secondary group discussed middle and high school schedule changes and distance learning. Group discussions were facilitated by Matt Gibson, Christine Hedstrom and Eileen Depka; Board of Education members recorded feedback.

Each attendee was asked to fill out a survey after the session. Sixty-three (45%) surveys were returned.

When asked (question 1 on survey) what prompted individuals to attend the session, some responded it was to learn about all options and the district's overall financial situation. Many specifically indicated it was the proposed high school schedule change, multi-age programming and/or a possible charter school that prompted their attendance.

Attendance & Feedback on Session Structure

The following chart indicates the approximate number of attendees at each session and their answers to two questions on the survey, as well as feedback themes on the session format:

Questions:

- 2. Did the session inform you on Elmbrook's financial planning process and items being considered as long-term solutions?*
- 3. Do you feel you had an opportunity to both listen and provide feedback at this session?*

	# attendees	# surveys returned	"Yes" to Question 2	"Yes" to Question 3
Thursday, May 20, 7pm	35	19	79%	90%
Friday, May 21 7:30/ 9:30 a.m.	10/15	18	83%	100%
Wednesday, May 26 4/7 p.m.	40/40	26	85%	96%

Feedback on Format of Session

Overall, attendees wished they would have had more information before attending. Discussion evolved into many questions and answers rather than feedback. Some indicated they felt decisions were already made and that any feedback they gave wasn't going to be seriously considered. Some were expecting that more would have been discussed than just the budget study team recommendations. Some requested that there be separate rooms for each of the two discussions.

-Continued-

Volunteer Commitments Made

After completing the survey questions, 36 people indicated they would like to participate in the financial planning process by serving on a budget study team or focus group in the future. (The district collected contact info.)

Summary of Major Feedback Themes (all notes are available through the Communications Department)

Multi-age Programming

- Overall theme: Need more information... What is this program? How is it academically successful?
- Some advocated for the program based on past positive experiences
- Some favored the cooperative approach and their child having the same teacher for two years
- Some believed it provided social benefits for students
- Some expressed their concern with the concept based on past negative experiences
- Some were against the program because they didn't want their child to have to "mentor/tutor" younger children in this setting
- Some were resistant to change, feel it is a sacrifice and wouldn't provide a solid education
- Questions/concerns about differentiation and lack of individual attention
- Concerns that some families would leave the district due to multi-age
- Many felt it should be implemented based on educational value and family interest, not to reduce costs
- More meetings on the topic requested for parent info
- Some requested 4K

Charter School

- Overall theme: Need more information... What is a charter school and what are the educational benefits?
- Questions about what research was conducted to know that this type of a charter school is desired and would increase enrollment
- Questions about core curriculum in a charter school
- Questions about how special education students would perform in this setting
- Questions about the need to re-district with a charter school use of a current building
- Questions/concerns about accountability and fundraising for charter schools
- Questions about selection of students for the school if interest exceeded space
- Questions about staffing
- Questions about transportation
- Concerns about competitiveness between current traditional elementary schools and a charter school
- Some felt charter school offerings (i.e. foreign language) should be offered in all Elmbrook elementary schools
- Some were resistant to change
- Some requested 4K

Middle School Schedule Changes

- Overall theme: Many people seemed acceptable of combining elective classes
- Some were concerned that the change will limit student choices and elective specialization
- Questions and more research needed on ACE

High School Schedule Changes

- Overall theme: The decision is being rushed without time to process ramifications
- Staff, student and parent buy-in is needed before proceeding
- Many felt that daily contact is needed in certain subject areas
- Many felt the schedule would work with some subject areas
- Some teachers felt they would lose individual tutorial time with students
- Questions/concerns/ more research needed on impact this schedule would have on all students of all learning levels: special education (loss of daily contact), students in the middle (loss of tutorial time), gifted & talented (stress due to adding another rigorous course to their load)
- Some expressed that block schedules have been successful in other high-achieving districts
- Some expressed that area districts with block schedules have lower student achievement results
- Concerns about lack of communication with students, teachers, parents
- Question/concerns about budget study team process
- Concern about increased teacher workload having a negative effect on students
- Questions about teacher professional development
- Concerns about losing quality teachers due to change
- Questions/concerns about raising graduation requirements
- Questions/concerns about how Youth Options will be affected
- Questions/concerns about how an absences, field trips, early release days would affect learning with this schedule
- Concerns about student attention span for 90 minutes
- Are there alternatives that should be considered? 3-2 was discussed, adding a 6th assignment but keeping the current schedule was discussed
- Concern... what if this doesn't work? Suggestion of implementing at one school or a trial period to test
- Some felt it was a viable option that has worked elsewhere, and should be implemented to address the budget shortfall
- Questions about teacher salaries & benefits

Distance Learning

- Feedback that one-semester required courses should be targeted for summer school because they disrupt schedules for students who want year-long classes
- Feedback that distance learning should not be the only delivery model for a given course