**Upper Darby School Budget Forum**

**Moderator Report**

**Group #1**

**Beverly Hills Middle School - 3.5.13**

**Moderator Loretta Raider**

**Scribe Tamika Barrow**

Group Description: There were 20 people in our small group; however, only 18 were vocal/voting participants. The other two were observers, one of whom was from Harris’s course. I am not sure what the other person’s affiliation was as observer. Three-fourths of the group was women and one-fourth was men. One-fourth was Black and the remaining group members were White with one Asian participant/observer. As we shared around the room what motivated the participants to come to the forum, the majority was vested parents of children in the school district and/or concerned about what these proposed cuts will mean for the community and the quality of education. There was a handful that came because they were concerned educators or students. Finally, there was a handful that came because they were concerned about property taxes.

**Low Hanging Fruit**

* #1, #4, #9 Reduce elementary, middle school and high school teachers due to attrition (Passed with 14/18, 15/18, and 13/18 votes respectively)
  + Rationale:
    - Difference in class size has minimal impact on instruction.
    - This does not require layoffs but just means that new hires will not replace retirees.
  + Concerns:
    - Increased class size does impact instruction in early elementary grades.
  + Points: 9+4+9=21
* #19 Instruction and Curriculum 🡪 Reduce by 10% (Passed with 15/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - Selecting actions like this (discussed in conjunction with #22) will minimize impact on what is happening in schools which the group priorities.
    - They were *for* making cuts to district-wide staff in lieu of direct cuts to school staffing as it appeared easier to reduce the percentage of directors and supervisory supports than reduce things that directly impact classroom instruction.
  + Points: 2
* #22 Office of Superintendent (Passed with 15/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - Participants argued that teachers have taken on more responsibilities with proposed budget cuts. Superintendents should also be prepared to make similar sacrifices. Although they would not call the roles of secretaries obsolete, they did believe that superintendents could take on more responsibility that would be performed by secretarial support.
  + Points: 1

**Shared Pain**

* #28 Transportation (public/nonpublic) 🡪 Reduce by 10% (Passed with 10/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - There are ways to get around transportation gaps that would be created for high school students. A parent/Philly educator made the suggestion of looking to SDP as a model the UDSD could potentially follow for managing transportation.
    - Rather than viewing this as an end to field trips, students can absorb the costs of field trip transportation.
  + Concerns:
    - Reductions in transportation would inconvenience parents who would now have to bring their children to school.
    - There is the potential for increased loitering and violence in the neighborhoods in the vicinity of the high school during dismissal.
  + Points: 7
* #34 Band, choral, theater and extra pay/extra duty 🡪 Reduce by 10% (Passed with 10/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - Head choral director has already stated that she is willing to make these cuts to extra pay in order to preserve the program (as per HS student).
    - In comparison to classroom instruction, clubs are less integral to learning.
  + Concerns:
    - The principal has discretion over how money is allocated. Do we trust that these decisions will be for the arts (priority)? How much influence will we (constituencies) have over how the money is allocated?
    - In comparison to the concern about prioritizing spending for classroom instruction, extracurricular activities are a motivator for students who may not solely be motivated by academics. In addition, they are a necessary “booster” for college applications. (testimony of two HS students)
  + Proposal:
    - Grant writing to raise supplemental funds that would have paid for extracurricular activities.
  + Points: 1
* #35 Property Taxes 🡪 Raised by $79 (Passed with 11/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - If we want to close the budget gap, the points allotted for increasing taxes will make a huge impact without sacrificing resources for classroom instruction.
    - Constituencies acknowledge that this is not an easy decision to make, but worth it if it doesn’t sacrifice classroom instruction.
    - This is an inevitable evil. Constituencies acknowledge that taxes will go up regardless. Selecting this category (hopefully) gives voice/control over how much this will increase by.
  + Concerns:
    - This is not easy (and maybe questionably feasible) for those of low SES who are already making sacrifices
  + Points: 22
* #37 Fund Balance 🡪 Use $1 million (Passed with 12/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - “We need to keep ourselves afloat and this is less painful to do.”
    - “Last year $2mill was put back into the budget.”
  + Points: 10

**Gut Wrenching**

* #1 Elementary Classroom Teachers 🡪 Eliminate kindergarten (Passed with 9/18 votes)
  + Rationale:
    - Kindergarten is not compulsory. The school district needs to “get good at” what it is mandated to do.
    - The current half-day schedule is currently inconvenient for working parents who need all day care.
    - Half-day kindergarten is unproductive for this age group.
    - Someone argued that cutting kindergarten funding would mean that the state would have to step up and increase funding for ECE. (unsure of the validity of this line of thinking)
  + Concerns:
    - Families cannot afford to pay for kindergarten. This would be an undue financial burden to those who do not have another option for childcare and educating their children.
    - A participant argued that cuts to kindergarten would mean that these children would migrate to charter and private schools. This would mean that the school district would lose students who likely would not return to be part of the Upper Darby student body.
    - Someone expressed concern that by cutting kindergarten we would no longer be setting students up for success without this educational foundation.
  + Proposal:
    - The school district needs to begin to think outside of the box. Kindergarten can be replaced with a kinder voucher system where every kinder aged child would receive a voucher (e.g. $1000) to be applied towards kinder care/learning. Parents would then be empowered to select appropriate educational and child care needs.
  + Points: 24

**No Way No How**

* #2, #5, #8 Eliminate Elementary, Middle School, and High School Lead Teachers
  + Rationale:
    - One of the HS students could see the usefulness of the Lead Teachers on the high school level but not in elementary and middle school. Many parents spoke up regarding how integral this role is to the well-being of children.
  + Concerns:
    - In elementary schools, lead teachers serve in lieu of Assistant Principals. They are a great (and oftentimes the only) pseudo-administrative support for building Principals.
    - They are a support to teachers who may struggle with management.
    - Parents view them as a resource for students who may struggle behaviorally and socially with getting acclimated to the school context.
  + Points: 5+2+2=9

**GRAND TOTAL – 97 POINTS**