

Expenditure Reduction Survey

Executive Summary

Presented to Carroll ISD School Board November 29, 2010

Survey Participation Rate

- The survey was conducted online beginning the day after the district's school finance forum (October 20, 2010) and ending at midnight on Friday, November 12, 2010. The district holds a \$200 membership to Survey Monkey and did not incur additional costs associated with conducting this budget survey.
- A total of 1,529 people took the survey; 1,280 (83.7%) of the respondents completed the entire survey.
- Approximately one-third (30.2%) of the respondents have lived in Carroll ISD 0-5 years and more than half (56.5%) have resided here 10 years or less.
- There were a total of 211 survey respondents who indicated they do not live in CISD. These respondents are likely employees, but a total of 25 people took the survey and are not associated with Carroll ISD.
- Half of the survey respondents (50.4%) have children currently enrolled in elementary school; each of the other grade levels (intermediate, middle, high and senior high) represented 22.9%, 20.7%, 18.1%, and 13.7%, respectively).
- There were about 10.6% of the respondents who had children graduate from CISD and just below 10% who have a baby or toddler-age child at home.
- A total of 272 survey respondents (17.8%) have no children currently attending CISD.
- A total of 1,169 parents took the survey, representing 76.6% of the respondents. There were 383 employees who responded to the survey and 30 students. The survey was also taken by 153 business owners and/or community leaders. Participants were asked to select multiple answers to this question if applicable (i.e. an employee who resides in the district and pays taxes could mark three responses).
- Of the total respondents, 1,039 were CISD taxpayers. This represents 68.1% of the survey respondents.

Budget/Financial Awareness & Participation

- Respondents appear to be **knowledgeable** of the district's current financial situation. A total of 72.9% say they are familiar or very familiar with CISD's budget outlook. If you add those respondents who felt they were somewhat familiar, the percentage jumps to 97.4%.

- A total of 1,331 respondents (88.4%) were **aware** the Board and Administration had already taken action to reduce the projected operating deficit from \$4.3 million to \$2.1 million.
- That number is comparable to 1,324 respondents (88%) who said they **generally agree with the budget-cutting steps taken so far**.
- A total of 762 respondents (58.2%) said they would be **willing to write a letter or call their Legislative representatives asking that they Make Education A Priority in the next Legislative session and beyond**. However more than half (64.4%) said they would not participate in a **trip to Austin to deliver that message in person in January**.
- There were 56 survey respondents who asked to be contacted about the district's financial outlook, the ER process or state funding issues.

Attitudes About Individual Budget Reduction Options

- Respondents were split in their support of an **increase to class sizes in grades 5-12**. A total of 51.7% agree or strongly agree, while 48.4% disagree or strongly disagree. This question had 341 comments. Generally, people are concerned about class sizes already – especially at the fifth and sixth grade level. Most written comments indicated respondents fear this will have a direct effect on the quality of instruction in the classroom.
- Respondents favor more intensely **a change from the 9-12 block scheduling to a modified block schedule**. A total of 68.5% of those surveyed agree or strongly agree with this option, while 31.5% disagree or strongly disagree. Many of the 249 written comments indicated that parents are unsure of the overall impact of such a change because they have elementary children or do not understand the differences enough to intelligently comment.
- A total of 72.6% of those surveyed agree or strongly agree with **reducing one teacher planning period at the intermediate (5/6) level**. Support was slightly lower (70.6%) for **reducing one teacher planning period at the middle school (7/8) level**. Comments here expressed concerns about losing electives. This option was generally supported, however, when compared to **restructuring or reducing programs like: K-6 science labs** (50.6% agree or strongly agree), **K-8 CARE Reading** (37.2% agree or strongly agree), and **QUEST** (48.8% agree or strongly agree).
- One of the strongest levels of disapproval for any budget reduction idea showed up when respondents were asked about **reducing extracurricular programs and student travel for grades 7-12**. Approximately 53% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this option, along with 29% who disagreed. Together, these percentages equaled the highest level of disagreement (82%) for any single budget-cutting idea. It should be noted, however, that there were 345 comments on this questions. There were

statements showing support for extracurricular participation as it relates to student performance, involvement and less disciplinary reports. However, many of the survey respondents who expressed concerns about taxes, school spending and costs-associated with extracurricular activities expressed concerns over costs associated with football and the stadium renovations, the number of coaches employed by CISD and an emphasis on extra-curricular activities over academics and core classes.

- Respondents were nearly as strong in their response to **the elimination of student bus transportation**. A total of 41% strongly disagreed. When added to the 28.7% of respondents who disagreed, the level of dissatisfaction with this expenditure reduction idea reached nearly 70%. There were a total of 469 written comments on this ER idea – most were extremely concerned about traffic, student drop-off/pick-up lines and safety. By comparison, 70.3% (equally split in level of intensity) disagreed or strongly disagreed with **eliminating bus transportation services for students who reside within two miles of their home campus**. There were 367 written comments for this ER idea – most were comments about charging fees, traffic and safety.
- Survey respondents generally supported (66.8%) **altering triple staggered school start/end times in an effort to reduce the number of bus routes/costs**. The level of support for this option increased significantly when it was included along with all the other options in a survey.
- Overall, respondents agreed or strongly agreed (73.7%) with **reductions to administrative professional positions**. There were a number of individuals concerned about the impact to teachers if administrative positions were cut, but there were a lot of written comments throughout the survey regarding administrative and support staff costs being cut before classroom teachers.

Attitudes About Individual Revenue Enhancement Options

- The level of intensity was high (40.2 % strongly agree and 37% agree) for implementation of a **\$100 student activity fee for ALL students in grades 7-12**. This option seems to be preferred to a fee for athletes only, but the level of support remained high for this option (35.2% strongly agree and 32.7% agree). There were a total of 420 comments – mostly against - the option to charge a fee to athletes only.
- One of the strongest shows of support by respondents for a revenue enhancement idea came for **the sale of Carroll Intermediate School under favorable market conditions**. Nearly 90% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with this option. Of that amount, 56.1% strongly agree the property should be sold. There were 269 written comments about acting on this option before cutting teachers and programs and a number of respondents encouraged Trustees to maximize revenue by selling at the appropriate time.
- A similar show of support was indicated on the **shift of the fiscal year from September 1 to July 1**. Although respondents recognized this was a one-time, short-term option, a

total of 46.6% agreed and 28.9% strongly agreed (for a total of 75.5%) with this idea. Of the 263 comments, many did not feel this was a “real” savings, but thought the action should be done before teachers or programs are lost.

- There was a strong level of disapproval for **calling a general Tax Ratification Election (TRE)**. A total of 26.5% disagreed, while 40% strongly disagreed. These two numbers together total 66.5% of those surveyed who are against Trustees calling a TRE. The disapproval level of intensity increased when respondents were asked specifically about **calling an election for the 11 cents subject to Chapter 41 (Robin Hood) recapture**. A total of 54.2% strongly disagreed with a TRE for those 11 cents, and 25.5% disagreed, for a total disapproval rate of 79.7%. It should be noted, however, that respondents generally agreed (37.3%) or strongly agreed (39.9%) with hosting a tax ratification election for **a two-cent tax increase where monies would stay local in CISD**. There were a number of anti-tax written comments posted on this series of TRE questions.
- Survey respondents showed strong support - 86.6% in total - agreed (28.3%) or strongly agreed (58.3%) - with the concept of **CISD opening and running its own Dragon retail store in Southlake**. There were a number of written comments about being careful not to limit PTO sales in spirit shops or the Booster Club at the Dragon’s Den. Retail space costs were also a concern expressed.
- When asked about **a community-wide check writing campaign**, a total of 85.3% of the respondents agreed (37.6%) or strongly agreed (47.7%) with this idea. When asked how much they would be willing to give, a total of 85.3% of the respondents said between \$1 and \$500. There were 77 respondents who were willing to give between \$751 and \$1,000 and another 53 who said they would contribute more than \$1,000 annually.

Other Noteworthy Items

- When asked whether or not they agree or disagree with Carroll ISD **increasing staff salaries to stay competitive with surrounding districts**, a total of 72% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. There were a total of 452 comments posted on this question. Many of the comments recognized the importance of retaining quality teachers with competitive salaries. There were a number of comments/concerns expressed about the salaries and benefits of administrators.
- When ranking expenditure reduction options, respondents preferred to make schedule changes and teacher planning period reductions rather than restructuring special programs like science labs, CARE and QUEST. Overall, however, they ranked an increase in class sizes last among the classroom-related ER ideas.
- When ranking revenue enhancement ideas, respondents generally favored an activity fee for all 7-12 students and staggered school start times over options like eliminating or reducing transportation or extracurricular/co-curricular budgets and travel.

- When ranking operational type budget measures, respondents generally favored selling Carroll Intermediate and shifting the fiscal year to options that called for Tax Ratification Elections where some of the monies would be recaptured as part of the Chapter 41 (Robin Hood) plan.

NOTE: Survey results will be shared publicly in the Communications & Marketing Department's Board Summary Report and also posted to the district's website beginning Tuesday, November 30.