



Draft Budget Highlights Feedback Survey Analysis

As part of the planning process for Bellingham Public Schools' budget for the 2018-19 school year, the district sought feedback from students, staff, families and community members regarding draft budget highlights. The draft budget highlights were shared via the district website, by email to staff and families and social media. The survey was open on Monday, March 26 and closed on Friday, March 30 at noon. A total of 337 people took the survey. They identified themselves as:

- 163 Parent/Guardian
- 158 Staff
- 15 Community member/neighbor
- 1 Student

The majority of respondents were affiliated with the elementary level at 48.25 percent, followed by the middle school at 22 percent and high school at 21.5 percent. Eight and three fourths percent identified at the district level.

After reviewing the budget draft, what resonates?

245 people responded to the question of what resonates for them in the budget highlights. Areas that received the most support include:

- Reducing class size in elementary schools (mentioned by 69 respondents)
- Introducing Social-Emotional Learning curriculum (mentioned by 38 respondents)
- Increasing resources for special education, especially Bridges and Life Skills (mentioned by 36 respondents)
- Increasing staff compensation (mentioned by 35 respondents)
- Free driver's education (mentioned by 29 respondents)

Representative comments:

"I appreciate the efforts to lower class sizes in the early grades, as well as additional support for our Special Education programs. Life Skills and AIMS programs continue to be drastically understaffed and while I appreciate the ingenuity of the programs, if they continue to grow with limited staffing, the physical and emotional safety of ALL students and staff will be in jeopardy."

"Continued support for smaller class sizes at the elementary level. I think this is vital for the success of our kids. Obviously I would support lower class sizes at all levels, however it is essential that our kids meet grade level skills and expectations at the elementary levels to have continued success in middle and high school."

"I appreciate all the efforts to providing equal access and opportunities for students. An example of this is driver's education in the high schools."

“Happy to see staff compensation, this is a great way to support education. The line about portables caught my eye. With all the money that has been spent on new buildings, which schools will be needing portables, how many will there be and what is the long-term plan to address building deficiencies?”

What’s missing or needs additional thought?

233 answered the question of what’s missing or needs additional thought from the budget highlights. Responses to this question were much more varied than the previous question. Themes included:

- Increase physical education (PE) time in elementary schools, and concern about compliance with state law (38 respondents mentioned this).
- Increase music and art in elementary schools (11 respondents mentioned music and eight mentioned art)
- Need for mental health services in middle schools
- Desire for more detail on plans for security and safety updates at schools
- Some negative comments about using money for drivers education
- Dissatisfaction with programming available to high functioning students such as highly capable learners (HCL) program

Representative comments:

“I’m disappointed that there is talk of putting world language in all elementary schools, as I think that money could be better spent at this time. We are still not in compliance with the state required amount of PE students should be receiving each week, and with our oldest starting kinder next year, I would much rather see her get more time to move her body and learn about how to work as a team more than once a week. I find that to be more important than “learning” a new language. I believe we should be investing in more PE and music before world language.”

“It would be really great to see more mental health counselors/school psychologists in the mix! Our counselors and psychs are so overworked with scheduling and testing that a lot of students seem to be missing social/emotional support at the high school/middle school levels.”

“I have noticed throughout the years that special education services do not have enough funding. There is a lack of support through IAs, funding for resources/materials/curriculum, and other necessities that they need to do their job. They are overworked and I feel that with that and the lack of resources that is why we have such a high turnover rate of this position, at least in our building.”

“Info on how much money you are spending on the “safety and security infrastructure upgrades” What is the actual plan to make our schools safer in the near future? How important school safety is over some of the other funded programs.”

“The HCL program continues to lag. Very limited opportunities to challenge highly capable students.”