
TASK #1: FINANCIAL OUTLOOK - STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Reflect on Lisle CUSD 202's financial health and future. Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of Lisle CUSD 202's financial outlook.

TASK #2: QUESTIONS - MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

What additional questions do you have about how Lisle CUSD 202 has been managing the community's financial resources?

According to the sign-in sheets the number of individuals attending the Wednesday, March 25, 2015 CES-3 was approximately 70. However this number does not include Facilitating Team members, Board of Education members and some school/central office administrators; and sometimes, late arrivals. The topic of the evening was "The Financial Landscape of Lisle CUSD 202" with a focus on "How does the school district manage its financial resources?"

To open the session, Lisle CUSD Superintendent Dr. Keith Filipiak presented a brief background on school finance and how the District is funded. Dave Wilkinson, Lisle's Director of Finance, then shared information about District expenditures and how the school district's funds are utilized.

Following the financial overview presentation, Session 3 participants worked in 15 small groups to complete the two tasks listed above.

Following is a summary of the response from the groups.

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Reflect on Lisle CUSD 202's financial health and future. Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of Lisle CUSD 202's financial outlook.

STRENGTHS

Three areas topped the list of financial strengths identified by participants in each of the groups. The District's **healthy reserves** and the District's **low debt** were both listed by a majority 10 of 15 groups. Also receiving a high mark was the District's **excellent bond/credit rating** with over half of the groups, 9 of 15, listing it as a strength. Participants gave strong approval to the District's overall **financial management practices**. Nearly half of the groups, 7 of 15, indicated

approval for the District's record of fiscal responsibility and practicing good financial planning. Other strengths including the **low tax rate, not being solely dependent on State of Illinois funding** and the practice of **cooperative purchasing** also received recognition from groups.

WEAKNESSES

While groups had strong agreement on financial strengths, participants were less likely to point to only one or two common items as financial weakness. However, about half of the groups listed **Lisle CUSD facilities** as a trouble area. Participants cited outdated elementary school buildings, the Meadows School not being used for educational purposes and deteriorating conditions at Lisle schools. Participants shared continued frustration and concern with the State of Illinois funding and future legislative actions. Seven of the groups specifically listed the **uncertainty of the State's finances and laws** as a weakness for the District's financial outlook. While not a majority, five groups simply stated the **"unknown factors"** and the **inability to predict unexpected revenues and expenditures** as a weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES

Many of the various opportunities presented by the groups related to curriculum and instruction, but over half of the groups, 8 of 15, saw the **District's facilities** as the greatest future opportunity. Participants mentioned the need for new schools, facility funding options and having the time for facility planning as key factors.

Groups shared other possible future opportunities, but no one item was as strongly identified as facilities. A few groups, 5 of 15, listed **paying off the debt**, and possibility paying off the debt early, as an opportunity. Other participant ideas focused on **teaching and learning opportunities** including curriculum development, expanding the staff and programs, improvements to technology for students and continued professional development for staff and administration.

CHALLENGES

As previously expressed by many of the groups, participants predict the **unknown factors** and **unclear status of the State of Illinois legislation and funding** as the areas that will present the most challenges to the District in the future. A strong majority of the groups, 10 of 15, in one way or another listed items they believe the District cannot control as the greatest challenges. They named unpredictable expenses like fuel costs, the economy, the State's poor financial health and legislative factors as future challenges.

In addition to previously being listed as an opportunity, the **District's facilities** were also cited as a future challenge. Half of the groups, 8 of 15, saw future

renovation, repairs and funding for facilities as a challenge to the District's financial outlook.

Some of the groups, 6 of 15, suggested ongoing efforts to **maintain high standards in the classroom** as a future financial challenge. Participants mentioned efforts to recruit and retain high quality teachers while staying fiscally responsible as a challenge. Others identified the increasing cost associated with employee benefits and classroom technology as areas that will impact District finances in the future.

TASK #2: QUESTIONS - MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The management of a school district's finances is a complex issue and, while participants discussed many areas of Lisle CUSD 202's financial outlook, the groups shared questions for additional information.

Like many of the earlier conversations, the potential for funding loss from the State of Illinois and the possibility of the State filing bankruptcy generated several questions such as "We wonder if there is an advantage to paying off the bond early?"

Other questions related to the pros, cons and opportunities as a result of the District paying off its bond debt early (earlier than 2019 when scheduled to be paid off) were also listed by groups. Questions included "What happens if the state goes bankrupt?" and "What is the District's plan for future loss of funding, ...State bankruptcy and how does it affect future spending?"

Participants asked for additional information related to Lisle CUSD schools, too. Groups asked for the "breakdown of financials for each building?" and "A New building—How will it be financed?" Also related to facilities, one group asked, "How do we plan to improve the security and to build safety into the front entrances of the schools?"

**For a complete listing of all responses
see the March 25, 2015 CES-3 Verbatim Response Document found at
www.vision202.org/ces-3/**