



Phase 3 Community Engagement Report

Since October 2023, Bloomington School District 13 has continued to look to the community to guide us as we determine the path forward for our schools. So far, we have received feedback from 1,016 members of the community through in-person presentations, online surveys, and scientific phone surveys on what improvements they would like to see to their schools and how they would like to fund those improvements.

Phase 3 of community engagement was conducted in April and May of 2024. Using the feedback provided by the public during Phases 1 and 2, we developed three options for the community to give their feedback. Throughout this phase, the district has been closely listening to the community as individuals considered and ranked each option.

District 13 has continued to take active steps to engage the community and solicit feedback. To achieve this, we updated messaging, met again with the Community Committee for another in-depth discussion, and conducted online engagement and another public phone survey. Feedback from the community was documented through notes taken of all direct communications, responses provided via digital feedback forms at the Community Committee meeting and online, and spreadsheets generated from the results of the scientific phone survey. We received tremendous levels of engagement and feedback in Phase 3, gathering 86 responses from the community committee and online feedback as well as 356 phone survey responses.

We are nearing the end of this community engagement process. As this process enters Phase 4, the district, equipped with all data gathered from the community to date, will work with the board to determine the best possible course forward that aligns with the community's wishes.

Messaging

The district continued to use messaging to properly communicate how we got to this point, what our successes and challenges have been, and how to approach the path forward. This messaging detailed recent progression and improvements as well as the district's infrastructure and funding challenges and limited opportunities as a result. The seven key takeaways from the messaging are below, and a full copy of the messaging is provided with this report.



- At Bloomingdale School District 13, we ensure an exceptional, individualized education for each and every child. We partner with our parents and community to help kids grow. It's the people who make this district special. As a small, community-based district, we're "small enough to care enough."
- You can see this District 13 difference in our students as they continue their education at Lake Park High School. Our students graduate as high performing, well-rounded kids of good character. They perform well above the state average, in the top three of DuPage County elementary school districts in math and top two in English.
- We accomplish this while spending the least per pupil of any elementary school district in the county. We use zero-based budgeting, evaluating our spending every year to ensure we are being as efficient as possible, reducing costs, and focusing our funding into classrooms. Our staff does a fantastic job making the most of what we have.
- But with the cost of education rising as student needs increase, and our district receiving limited state and federal support, we're starting to struggle to even maintain what we have, let alone make the improvements our residents are requesting.
- Despite our limited funding, we've found a way to succeed without having to go to taxpayers for over 30 years for additional support. But if we are going to fix our aging infrastructure, comply with the state's mandate for full day kindergarten, and give our students the 21st century learning environments they deserve, we will need additional funding.
- Investing in our schools would give our students and staff safer, more secure, and sustainable learning environments. Our kids and teachers would be able to thrive, with high level learning opportunities and students encouraged to create and collaborate. And we'd be able to provide more meaningful and positive community service projects to connect our students to our community.
- Over the next year, our community will be collaborating on a plan for the future of our schools. Please participate in this important community engagement. Together, we will determine our path forward.

Options Survey

During Phase 3, the district conducted another public phone survey to gauge support for each potential option. For each option, respondents were given full information on each item, including advantages and disadvantages as well as estimated costs and the average tax impact. The survey was taken before the full public had been educated on the options or fully informed of the district's needs. This was done in order to obtain an accurate representation of the public's unbiased, intuitive reactions to the options contained in the survey.

The results from the options survey are provided with this report.



Community Committee

The Community Committee met for the third time to provide the district with direct input. The committee is made up of a cross-section of District 13 stakeholders, including parents, teachers, taxpayers without children in the district, business owners, seniors, and elected officials.

The committee met on April 30 during Phase 3. Committee engagement will continue through Phase 4 of this community engagement process.

Feedback Report

Attached is a detailed report of the feedback that was collected during Phase 3 of this process, which includes feedback from the Community Committee as well as online feedback collected on the district's website.

Phase 3 Analysis

In forming our analysis of Phase 3, we reviewed all data provided in this phase as well as previous phases. Data is broken down into the intuitive reactions from the general public, the passionate responses from those who made a point to connect with the district in this process, and the informed opinions of those most engaged with the district and this process. This allows us to track the movement of opinions as individuals become more engaged and educated on the topics being discussed.

The feedback during Phase 3 continued to show a lot of positivity towards the process, district, and plan, including marked improvement in some of the community's concern points during Phase 2.

One concern brought up during Phase 2 was that the overall range of funding levels was too high. The district listened to that feedback and worked with their experts to reduce the scope of the projects and lower the overall costs of the options under consideration. The community responded: just 17% selected "No Additional Funding" in the options phone survey, down from 22% in the menu phone survey. This is significant, because typically at this stage we see an increase in the number of people choosing the "no" option; this is one of the few times we've seen this number decrease. Kudos to the district for listening to the community and responding to that feedback. It was noticed and clearly appreciated.

While all three options have support, the community shows a preference towards Option 3. This is the first choice of the community committee, nearly universally, as well as the top option from online feedback. It is also statistically first in the phone survey (tied with Option 1 due to rounding, but Option 3 is at 28.4% while Option 1 is at 27.6%, so Option 3 is statistically first). This option receives the strongest support and the most passion, especially among people 44-and-under and those with children in D13 schools.

That said, there is still some concern over the tax impact, especially with two questions. Option 1 is strongly supported by seniors and those with no ties to the school district. This is significant because these subsets are not saying they are not willing to provide additional funding to D13, just that they prefer the bond-only path forward.

Option 2 has minimal support. Either people prefer addressing just the infrastructure through one ballot question (Option 1) or they want all the benefits that come from going with Option 3.



Taking all this feedback into account, we recommend moving forward with the community's top choice, Option 3, while working diligently to educate the community on why there is a need to go beyond just the traditional bonds that make up Option 1. The data shows the more people are aware of the drawbacks associated with Option 1 (and even Option 2), they embrace Option 3.

We also recommend moving forward in the November election with both questions. The data shows the community is ready to have their voices heard at the ballot box now, and the plan has strong odds of success. The traditional bonds to fund the infrastructure work are favorable across the board, giving this question the best chance at success. Work will need to be done to inform voters why the limiting rate increase is needed, but the data shows that educational effort should result in success. The good news is even if it is not successful immediately and this question does not succeed in November while the traditional bond question succeeds, the district would be able to re-engage the community immediately and go again for the limiting rate increase in April of 2025 to complete the process.

