EDA 611: Budget Development

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EDA 611: Pro Development Seminar I

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**Instructions:**

**• Interview the school principal or district office fiscal director of how the budget is developed.**

**• If you are developing the budget, how would you determine how to allocate resources?**

**• How does the budget align to the strategic goals of the district?  
• What is the overall fiscal health of the district?**

**Budget Development:**

“The description of instructional leadership that has attained the highest level . . . . identif[ies] four dimensions or roles: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence” (Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty B., 2005). Ernestro Castro, Principal at the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex, with detailed budget development allocation with Cristina Joya, SAA, communicated budget development from the instructional side as well as the very complex budget allocation process funneled through procurement and district specialists in charge of allocation related to compliance issues. Castro and Joya both amplified Marzano et al. (2005) about the necessity to truly vet the budget process with as many willing and competent stakeholders. Castro indicated that most of principals are not too involved in the nuances of budget development, a weekly budget meeting usually between principal, SAA, Community of Schools Coordinators, and TSP Coordinators allow for a medium of communication of compliance timelines, status updates, and team agreement where monies can be allocated.

These meetings often are the gateway to proposed budgets that are agreed on provisionally only to be added to School Site Council (SSC) and School Governing Board (SGB) agendas to be introduced and voted on when the monies are usually tied to Title 1, Title IX, TSP funding, ELAC funding, and SpEd allocations that are locally and district funded. However, about 30% of the monies allocated do not have to go through a local stakeholder community vote. These funds can be decided on by the local fiscal team with principal approval.

**Personal Allocation**

A personal note is that I desire to be intimately competent with the budget process and understand the nuances of compliance concerns to make informed decisions. As stated by Marzano et al. (2005), resource provider and instructional resource allocator are tenets of effective instructional leadership. The above team relies on the local SAA to drive the budget decisions related to categorical funding bars and lines to be processed through off-campus fiscal specialists that provide coordination between allocated funds related to SPSA alignment and TSP, TI funding justification related to the SSC and SGB voting. Also, I’ve noticed and the above team indicated that being very diligent about deadlines and understanding district approved vendors and processes are needed to avoid district violations that can lead to “after-the-fact” funding that the district requires a complete district exemption process that requests the local and district superintendent to sign off as an error in budget processing. This is seen as a negative mark on the principal so it is pertinent for the principal to be aware of these timelines and district restrictions before approving the budget. It will be my endeavor to vet the programs with as many stakeholder input tied to viable data-driven instruction. In my present situation, there is very little hands-on or intellectual understanding by the principal to make informed decisions that are solely focused on faithful data. Without the fidelity of the process, my empirical experience is that expenditures are haphazard and spent on trendy programs. I desire to put forth the effort in being faithful in the data analysis that connects theory to practice.

**Alignment to the strategic goals of the district:**

Related to budget development and fiscal allocation, the simplistic conversation is that there monies that roll-over and often connected to General Funds and non-rollover funding directly tied to discretionary district funding tied to district goals and federal/state monies tied to state educational goals. For example, in the General Funds, when monies are not yet allocated to categorical expenditures, these funds, though the intent is to protect based on the rollover status, can be temporarily used to pay for programs that are tied to SGB and SSC compliance, TSP and/or SPSA justifications, and/or state/federal funding that are in process of funding to broad alignment or restrictive expenditure.

Title 1 and TSP fundings are tied to local governance; however, are funded by state and federal funding that must be tied to SPSA planning related to the local demographics that qualify the school for these types of funding. The SPSA plans are often processed through a special division that needs to approve of the school’s narrative justification before sending to the state and federal agencies that audit the process to justify the discretionary funding tied to the local school plan for student achievement. Additionally, demographics like Miguel Contreras Learning Complex (MCLC) qualify for federal and state funding like Title 1 and TSP funding; however, MCLC is often the recipient of funding that can change on new or adjusting state and federal funding tied to state laws and regulations connected to election results. For example, MCLC fiscal 23-24 lost 1.25 million dollars in budget allocation related to ESSR and SENI monies that use federal and state funding related to Student Equity Needs Index quantitative categories that target extra expenditure tied to average income, education, incarceration, unemployment, etc. These fundings are tied to the school’s strategic goals because they use concrete measures related to the local stakeholder community; however, as stated, all these monies just disappeared and then reallocated in different areas, typically, that are tied to the local and state shifting goals processed through the legislative process.

Three examples of new 23-24 monies that did not previously that are tied to the district and to MCLC goals are the i-Attend, ISSP, and the TFI programs. The i-attend is presently a district initiative that repurposed ESSR and SENI monies to target attendance increase. These i-attend monies are spent on increasing the capacity of the PSA counselors, trainings, home-visitations, and certification intervention efforts to justify additional resources and supports to increase the overall district attendance related to funding incentives. ISSP fundings are tied to a Blueprint for School Safety that allocate funding related LAUSD’s strategic plan via identified pillars: Academic Excellence, Joy and Wellness, Engagement and Collaboration, Operational Effectiveness, Investing in Staff. For example, the Assistant Principal’s salary is paid out of Pillar 1, Academic Excellence. When it comes to budget, the fiscal team has to write a justification related to the district’s Strategic Plan (Los Angeles Unified School District: ISSP, 2023). The Individual School Student Achievement Plan is tied to training modules that target instruction and holistic stakeholder involvement related to modules on Sexual Grooming, Child Abuse, and Subtance Abuse. Lastly, tied to the ISSP are modules and personnel support allocated to a new district initiative called the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) that offers training, resources, and, of course school verification of training related to Tier 1-3 levels of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) that targets Restorative Justice Practices and SEL integration that activates supports from the The School of Mental Health and on-site PSW psychiatric efforts.

**Health and Status of Budget**

Anticipating a 1.25 million dollar shortage, the School of Business and Tourism decided to apply for the 250K funding offered through the Community of Schools Initiative. This was done with the funding as an incentive and the belief that this partnership would be benefit our local community. Still with almost a million dollars short from the 22-23 school year, funding has recently been funneling in via new initiatives. For example, we received a new position for 150k for an “Interventionalist” for intervention supports to replace the loss of a Bridge Coordinator in charge of the SpEd Coordinator duties. Additionally, our enrollment has declined by 60 students in one year while attendance is tied to enrollment and attendance. Through the i-attend efforts, we are maintaining the attendance incentives, but the enrollment decline is devastating to the present and future of the program. Lastly, just last week, we received notice that we will be losing an RSP position along with the SpEd TA to support. It looks like the local budget will need to pay for these positions to keep the caseload reasonable. This will be a request of approximately 185k to accommodate this program. We have had to cut a lot of programs (e.g., I Learn America, Educare, Creating Creators); however, as monies start to be released, the request is to be frugal and creative, spending non-rollover money before depleting rollover categories. For example. The Cultural Arts Program Legislation released about 85k to be spent on curriculum related to the advocacy of art programs via clubs, trainings, field trips, and conferences. All in all, we are surviving and doing our best to be patient while prioritizing instructional curriculum that directly and tangibly affects the classroom. As stated, in the ebb and flow of educational funding, I desire to be an administrator that does the hard work in data analysis that can justify the spending of every penny. If time is allocated for money spent on faculty/staff professional development, I want it to be well developed and profitable in the interim while impacting the educator and student extrinsically and intrinsically.

References

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