

## Budgeting Activity

After reading the entire text, *The Principal's Guide to School Budgeting*, you are to do the following:

- Determine the major points put forth by Sorenson and Goldsmith in terms of school budgeting. Articulate these points in list format.
- Create a list of questions to ask the administrator.
- Meet with a local school administrator to discuss the budgeting process to which s/he subscribes. Interview the administrator using the list of questions that you created.
- Summarize the interview responses. In doing so, compare and contrast similarities and differences found between Sorenson and Goldsmith's ideas on budgeting and the interview responses.

This document should not exceed 2 pages.

Upload this document to your drop box using the D2L site for ED 636. The document must be uploaded in Word, pdf, or rtf.

### Rubric

Author has articulated partially the major points regarding budgeting as put forth by Sorenson and Goldsmith (10 points)	Author has articulated adequately the major points regarding budgeting as put forth by Sorenson and Goldsmith (12 points)	Author has articulated in exemplary fashion the major points regarding budgeting as put forth by Sorenson and Goldsmith (14 points)
The author has created a partial list (3-5) of questions to ask the administrator (12 points)	The author has created an adequate list (6-8) of questions to ask the administrator (16 points)	The author has created an complete list (9 or more) of questions to ask the administrator (20 points)
The author has summarized the interview responses and compared and contrasted partially the similarities and differences found between the textbook authors' budgeting advice and the administrator's responses (12 points).	The author has summarized the interview responses and compared and contrasted adequately the similarities and differences found between the textbook authors' budgeting advice and the administrator's responses (16 points).	The author has summarized the interview responses and compared and contrasted fully the similarities and differences found between the textbook authors' budgeting advice and the administrator's responses (20 points).
The author has made more than 3 spelling, syntax, or grammatical errors (0 points).	The author has made 1, 2, or 3 spelling, syntax, or grammatical errors (.5 point).	The author has made no spelling, syntax, or grammatical errors (1 point).

## Interview Questions

1. When you are determining the allotment of your budget, do you try to figure out changes you can make for the next year? More so, advertise the school to Title 1 students, ELL and/or SPED students?
  - a. No. Everything gets billed that can. My goal of this was to ascertain if it matters to our school which students will come in. The answer is no.
  
2. What items have you had to make cutbacks on? Do you regret cutting those items back or which you cut a different item back?
  - a. Cutbacks on curriculum – but were able to get curriculum in a different way. For example, buying curriculum and making copies – knowing it was legal.
  - b. Staff Development comes from title 2 funds. When money runs out, staff development ceases.
  
3. When you develop a plan for budgeting, what are your most important criteria that you look for?
  - a. The balance of talented teachers, current technology and curriculum needs.
  - b. We keep getting awards which skew our numbers.
  - c. 9 years of budget – allows DaVinci to forward think.
  
4. Knowing that you have to abide by the budget, what changes do you make? Have you ever gone over budget and why?
  - a. Substitute teachers went over budget – 10 days per teacher actually being taken
  - b. Apply for tech grants
  - c. Never came out of general overspending
  
5. Understanding and adhering to the ISLLC/ECCS standards, which has been the most difficult to navigate?
  - a. Community – could be the least in priority.
  
6. What additional sources of income have you been able to generate? How did you achieve this?
  - a. Fundraising is not high on agenda
    - i. CFP grant – 3-year grants for start-up opportunities - \$200,000 per year, but needs to go for planning on everything except building.
    - ii. Golf tournament
    - iii. Spaghetti dinner

7. Have you ever had to be late with paying the bills? If so, what did you do to make things whole again? If not, what is the procedure or routine that has allowed you to remain fiscally responsible?
  - a. No. The clerk pays the bills and we have never needed to postpone payments. Credit card can be maxed out (\$20,000) but PO's are another way of spending.
  
8. Have you ever had to deal with an employee that you thought may be embezzling? What actions did you take or think of taking?
  - a. No. Some items like an employee keeping a computer after they leave
  - b. FMLA leave – 12 weeks – have to save their job. Pay health insurance as an institution, but if people leave and don't pay back, what is the next course of action. Credit retrieval comes after you.
  
9. How does your school determine the salary distribution table? Knowing it is negotiable, how often do people try to negotiate and how do you factor these into the budget?
  - a. Range of salaries. Negotiate on a case-by-case basis. Not steps and lanes. Master's level does not necessarily increase. Most people are good-to-go.
  
10. What do you do if you have an excess in budget? For example, say 20 out of 40 teachers do not use their class budget and there is \$4,000 unused in total. Where does the money go? Do you plan or hope for unused budgets?
  - a. Gets put into general fund.
  - b. Lunch fund may get extra funds – but turns out to be zero balance.
  
11. What is the most important rule you adhere to about budgeting?
  - a. Being responsible.
    - i. We need to be ethical and responsible
    - ii. Standards are higher.

## Summary of Interview

The interview results had very many, and mostly, similarities to the text, yet there were a few differences. I think that being in the state of Minnesota and being a charter school is the reason those differences were more pronounced.

The similarities were in abundance. The most notable was the allocation of funds. This procedure is consistent from year to year. I was let know that one thing that can have a significant impact on the allocation of funds is the change in government. For the last several years, the Democratic Party has ruled in Minnesota in all aspects – Senate, Governor, and President. Another similarity between the interview and the text was the ‘keys to being successful’. It seemed like our school followed all of the rules that the text was preaching to our choir. We’ve never missed a bill payment, haven’t had to deal with embezzlement, never gone over budget as a whole (really only in one area in one year), and we continue to maintain good student numbers per grade. There has been one discrepancy with the budget since our school’s inaugural year, and that was when our staff had a multitude of absences which led to the Teacher’s On Call (TOC) budget to not be adequate. This money had to be found in other departments and it was.

The question I was a little surprised about was the salary that is offered was mostly accepted by the teachers and not negotiated. Every year I’ve been at DaVinci, I’ve negotiated my salary. Last year, I asked for a significant raise and was granted it. I know that math is a harder position to fill, but I have a higher salary than if I were in any unionized district that had steps and lanes. This is true by 10%. Having a master’s instead of a bachelor’s has little to no effect on the salary. After talking with some of the teachers who do have master’s, they said they really liked having less students and didn’t care as much about pay.

Something else interested me in this interview, the question of what happens to unused funds. At my current school, unused funds get redistributed to other funds. If something looks like it will not get spent, my school finds a way to spend it. Whatever does not get spent will go away and is lost for good. That also was something I read in the text. You have to spend what is allocated or it cannot only go away, but be budgeted for you differently the following year.

My most important question was simply, “what is the most important rule you adhere to about budgeting?” The answer was simple and uplifting, “be ethical and responsible.” I love honest people. I look for them and provide as much support as possible for those people. I have worked in places as a teacher and a leader where there was a clear misuse of power. I can only imagine that these people not only used paperwork to manipulate the situations they found themselves in, but probably used budgetary items in an improper way as well (SPED spending vs. general ed.). My wife also worked for a principal who was fired for that very reason. That is neither here nor there, but I have seen it and I’m glad my school focuses on honesty and continues to budget well.