



Financial Levers Memo

The Legion of Data Nerds, with support from Invest in Neighborhood Schools and the Washington Task Force, proposes levers to reach district utilization above 70% in each middle school feeder pattern¹ while prioritizing students, Title I schools, and programming. These levers are inspired and informed by the [Washington Task Force suggestions](#) and the [IINS proposal](#).

A path to stability and equity: Over \$16.7 Million in savings

- **Close one elementary school** in the Haven feeder pattern to right-size utilizations and reduce operational costs, while minimizing student, teacher, and programming disruptions districtwide
- Ensure the **successful opening of Foster School**, by dedicating focused administrative support and community partnership to implement best practices for school openings² and advance African-Centered Curriculum Reimagined
- **Temporary freeze on school closures** and Program Reductions: **four-year moratorium on closure of Title 1 schools, two-year moratorium on closure of all other schools**, and **no cuts to special programming** until all ongoing audits (financial, forensic, Special Education, Board policies) and FY27 financials are complete
- **Administration right-sizing**³ to bring D65 in line with peer districts and reduce additional operational costs
- Conduct a **comprehensive, community-engaged needs assessment**⁴ to develop clear goals centered on student academic excellence, equity, and walkability
- Leverage the City-School Liaison Committee to **improve collaboration between the City, Northwestern, community partners, D202, and D65** and identify opportunities for cost sharing and/or revenue

Primary levers:	Savings >\$16.7M: (Annual \$10.9-\$12.7M) + (One-time \$4M)
● Close one north side elementary school	\$1.8M
● Administration right-sizing ⁵	\$1.6M
● Partial lease Joseph E. Hill (JEH) Education Center ⁶	\$0.25+M
● Sell Bessie Rhodes School building	\$4M
● Co-location of city/district services ⁷	\$2.15M
● Operating Fund Levers cited by D65 ⁸	\$3.8M
● Creative revenue from buildings	\$1.3-\$3.1M

Additional levers:

- Savings from Foster School contingency (\$3.7 Million total, **\$1.2 Million** previously unincorporated)
 - Incorporate audit savings (Special Education, forensic, financial, Board policies) (*TBD*)
 - Gradual increase to 90 days (or more) cash on hand over the next 5 years
 - Gradual increase in annual Capex over the next 5 years from \$1 Million to \$5 Million
 - Conduct market analysis **for all administrative position roles and salaries.** (*TBD*)
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Pros

- Maintains annual balanced budgets while progressively improving the financial position of the district each year through 2030
- Minimizes disruptions with less moving for students, teachers, and programs; decreased administrative burden of logistics of closing multiple schools
- Protects students, families, and teachers at Title I schools, and those involved in district special programming
- Allows ample preparatory time to implement new African-Centered Curriculum (ACC) Reimagined, train teachers, and ensure successful opening of Foster School
- Minimizes transportation costs
- Minimizes the chances of experiencing low-quality instruction because of overcrowding, inadequate space for small-group instruction, and high student-to-teacher ratios
- Showcases significant community buy-in, rebuilding trust among D65 families and potentially leading to increased enrollment in future, in addition to increasing the likelihood of passing any upcoming referendum in 2026/2027

Cons

- Relies on assumed success of levers like leasing JEH and creative revenue solutions
- Requires greater savings from non-school closure and non-program sources, a stronger partnership with the City, and more creative problem-solving to ensure financial progress
- Does not immediately achieve utilization rates of a two-school closure
- Risk of attrition among administrators

We believe this path **honors our shared values: ensuring every student thrives, protecting Title I schools, and rebuilding trust through measured, equitable action.** The Board's leadership will chart District 65's path forward. We offer these ideas as a starting point and are committed to supporting your work ahead.

[Legion of \(Data\) Nerds](#), [Invest in Neighborhood Schools](#) (IINS), & Washington Task Force (WTF)

Endnotes

1. See [calculations available here](#). Two strands assumed at Orrington Elementary to a) allow for additional space for potential co-location with services, administrative relocations and b) following [suggestions from Larry Gavin](#) in his 11/12/25 essay.
2. For example, see [Opening a New School in Allentown, Pennsylvania](#).
3. D65 has 6.13 admins per 1k students (36 admins for 5877 students). Peer districts have an average of 4.3 admins per 1k students, so if we bring admin headcount to 4.3 admins per 1k students, our admin headcount would be 25.27. A reduction of 10 or 11 admins times the D65 admin average total comp of \$152,409.19 = \$1.52M to \$1.68M in savings. Full calculations are available [here](#).
4. Following established best practices in [the Needs Assessment Guidebook](#).
5. See endnote 3 for more details.
6. The Joseph E. Hill Education Center could be partially leased (second floor), or entirely leased if it made sense to co-locate early childhood services.
7. Estimated range of 1.5-2.8M, depending on details of arrangement, which could include maintenance and other items.
8. Slide 51 in the [SDRP Phase 3 Scenario Presentation_11.3.25](#).