

## Community Opt Out Meetings Q + A

### 1. Is there a way to combine the superintendent and principal positions?

*Yes, it would be possible to combine the two positions into one, provided the individual has both the superintendent certification and the K-12 principal certification. Currently the elementary principal serves as PK-6 principal in town and K-8 principal at both colonies. In addition, he is the test coordinator for all the required state standardized tests our students need to take. The superintendent is also 7-12 principal and federal grant writer in addition to being superintendent. It would be possible to combine the two positions, but it would be a very stressful job, that would be difficult to fill.*

### 2. If you get rid of the buses, what are you going to do with a half million dollar building that's worth more than 80% of the businesses in town?

*Even if our bus service was contracted, we would always need to have buses in the district for activities and activity practices. Since we currently coop in sports with Armour, half of our football, volleyball, girls and boys basketball practices are in Armour, along with all of our track practices being held there. We are fortunate to have coaches who are licensed to drive buses and can transport those athletes to practice. Our band and vocal music students participate in contests and parades out of town and need to be transported as well. If our bus service was contracted, some of that transportation for music activities could be with the contracting service, but some of those contests might fall on our staff to transport. As long as we are a district, we will have buses and a need to transport students.*

### 3. Have we attempted to appeal the decision of losing our wind tower money?

*There is no appeal process. The change to the Other Revenues Fund (which our wind tower money falls into) was part of the sweeping legislation passed in 2016 to overhaul the K-12 funding formula, so it's law. Starting in school year 2017-18, those monies will be equalized and counted as local effort. In other words, our wind farm money will no longer be considered Other Revenue that we get as extra money outside of state aid. (When the wind farm was being considered, that was the situation. It was extra money we could use to operate the school outside of the General Fund.) It will be counted as our local tax effort, as part of our General Fund, and counted as money we contribute to our state aid. The result of that is that the state's contribution will decrease. The state will "equalize" our revenues and decrease them by 20% over five years, so that we receive no direct wind farm dollars. Then the state will re-distribute all the Other Revenues collected from every district in the state back to all the districts. Locals will not be allowed to keep their own Other Revenue, but will receive what the state gives back in state aid. The Other Revenue fund will be eliminated. There was an "alternative need" calculation option for districts to consider with their Other Revenue to see if they would do better under the new law or this alternative. TD School District had both the Associated Schools Boards of South Dakota and the Governor's office verify our calculations to see if the new law or the alternate would be more advantageous. Both ASBSD and Patrick Weber from the Governor's office concluded that TD School District would receive more money under the new formula than the alternate. We did not generate enough Other Revenue for the alternate to help us. There were only 2 or 3 districts in the state that went with the alternate.*

### 4. Tutoring one day a month isn't enough with the four day week.

*That's what we currently have scheduled, since the school day will be longer, we've scheduled 8<sup>th</sup> period every day to help students recover missing work or get extra help with assignments they are struggling with. If we think we need more tutoring time, we can change it as we have more in-service/work time for teachers scheduled each month.*

### 5. How many students are in each of the K-6 classrooms for possible further staff cuts?

PK: 10	3 <sup>rd</sup> : 10
K: 13	4 <sup>th</sup> : 16
1 <sup>st</sup> : 13	5 <sup>th</sup> : 10
2 <sup>nd</sup> : 7	6 <sup>th</sup> : 11

*At this time, the Board is not pursuing any additional staff cuts.*

**6. How many periods a day do high school and grade school teachers teach?**

*Elementary teachers do not go by periods, only the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and students do. Generally, the HS teachers teach 6 of the 7 periods and have an Ad Room daily. (Home room) There are some exceptions: our HS math teacher has students every period—and is teaching three different classes independently (Algebra 1, Algebra II, and Geometry) during 7<sup>th</sup> period to students who need to catch up on credits. This is very difficult, and not the ideal teaching situation, but she is making the best of it and helping these students. Others have stepped up to cover classes and given up their planning time. Elementary teachers are with their students all day, except when the special classes—music, computer and PE—are rotated in a couple times during the week.*

**7. Is it true that we have a teacher and a teacher aide in each of the two colonies with very few students? How many students are there?**

*Yes. Our SpEd Director goes out to the colonies to provide special education services to students who need those services. He is part time, so when he is not there, our paraprofessional staff continues to provide those needed services. The paras are not paid from General Funds, but from SpEd funds. Each colony has 10 students.*

**8. How many parents (what percentage) don't want grade or room sharing?**

*We don't have a number, but many parents have expressed concerns over combined elementary classrooms to the extent that they would send their children elsewhere if we combined classrooms.*

**9. When all is said and done, will the Opt Out grow the student population to the point we won't continually have to address this problem?**

*We don't know if the Opt Out will directly increase our enrollment, but having a great school is a great source of economic development and community pride and helps our communities grow, which should increase our student population. We are also hoping to attract a few new students with the four day school week.*

**10. Is hourly staff going to be given ANY wage adjustment or simply lose four days' wages per month? Why would staff want to stay?**

*We have great staff and don't want to lose anyone! We appreciate what all of our staff do to help our students be successful. We have not looked at the classified staff schedules yet, but they will increase their daily time, which shouldn't cause too much of a loss in wages for the week. We would hope staff would think this is a great place to be and stay with us.*

**11. If we dropped buses and paid mileage, how much would that save for the district?**

*We have not discussed dropping buses, but there is a possibility of losing students to neighboring districts who do run buses into Delmont and the edge of Tripp if we eliminate busing to school. A neighboring district, Avon, does pay mileage to parents because they do not transport any students to school. The law states that a district is only required to reimburse parents who live outside a five mile radius and is only required to reimburse parents for students in grade 8 and below. In addition, Avon does retain two buses for activity use.*

**12. What is the planning time for teachers per week?**

*Generally, JH/HS teachers get 50 minutes per day, or 250 minutes in a five day week. However, some teachers are voluntarily giving up their planning to cover other classes. Elementary teachers get only the time of their specials—rotated a couple a times a week between music, PE and computer. Those sessions are 30 minutes each, and it depends on how many specials a class has in a week.*

**13. “Googling” the question: “What is teacher planning time in South Dakota?” the first line was Sioux Falls. Answer in the policy was five hours per week.**

*We can’t speak to anyone else’s planning time in the state. Depending on the level, the number of periods in a day at secondary, and whether a school prescribes to a true middle school concept with one personal and one team planning a day, it is hard to estimate. Generally speaking, one period of planning per day for secondary is the norm.*

**14. Why does the district not increase student/teacher contact time (teach more periods) per day?**

*Like many professions, teaching requires preparation. You wouldn’t say a farmer only farms when he/she is in the fields, or a lawyer only practices law when in a courtroom, or a doctor is only practicing medicine when he/she is with patients. Like those professions, teachers need preparation time and time to plan for their instruction. Making lesson plans, correcting papers, entering grades, contacting parents, making copies, organizing class or lab materials, and reading are just a few of the ways teachers prepare to teach their classes. The amount of planning time they do have does not prepare them for a day’s work. Many hours outside of school are spent to get ready for a day’s teaching. We will not reduce our teachers’ planning time. With our longer school day next year, teacher contact time will increase.*

**15. How does Tripp-Delmont’s curriculum compare with adjoining districts like Parkston’s?**

*Generally speaking, a larger district with more staff is able to offer a more varied curriculum and more extracurricular offerings than a district our size. Generally, Parkston can offer more courses than we can, but Sioux Falls can offer more variety and more courses than Parkston. Our high school curriculum is basic, offers all the required coursework and a good choice of elective classes to meet the 22 credit requirement for high school graduation. The quality of our coursework is excellent.*

**16. Who determines good dirt, medium dirt and lesser dirt (for valuations)?**

*That would be a good question for your county Director of Equalization as we do not know.*

**17. What happens to the taxes in the future if the district closes anyway? Do they go back to normal?**

*If the district actually closes, or dissolves, land would be absorbed by the surrounding districts. New taxes would be dependent on the district your property is in. If your property is allocated to Parkston or Scotland, for example, you would pay the taxes of their districts. Tripp-Delmont would cease to exist and so would the school taxes for TD. However, you will always pay taxes to some school district, regardless if we have a school in town or not.*

**18. Is it true that Tripp-Delmont has had 4 or 5 vacancies in the past two years that could have been filled with existing staff for several of those positions but it was not done? Can you explain why a year with 7 open teacher positions, five of them could have been absorbed within? Why weren’t they?**

*In order to teach in any classroom in South Dakota, you must have the proper teacher certification. A teacher cannot teach a class that he/she is not certified to teach. For example, no teacher could fill our special education vacancy other than a teacher certified to teach special education. We made the decision to advertise and fill those vacancies with the best qualified staff we could find. The board wanted to maintain a quality education in our district.*

**19. If the board would make \$250,000 in staff cuts, which are possible, how many years longer could this district run?**

*Currently, we have identified \$125,000 in savings for next year. However, if you just wanted to make that much in staff cuts, you may be jeopardizing our state accreditation or looking at high school students taking online classes. Another possibility would be having elementary classrooms combining, which many parents do not want. A steady or growing student enrollment is the best remedy for longevity of our district.*

**20. We are looking for a school for many years, not just the five years the board is proposing. What is the overall plan even without Opt Out how long can school continue? SY22 then what?**

*We are proposing an Opt Out for five years, not the district to last five years. The state legislature is doing a study on the school funding changes from 2016. They are going to study for three years, then report out in year four. We wanted our Opt Out to last during this study so we know what changes they may be making to the existing law and possibly the funding formula. Our district has operated with the addition of Opt Out funds for almost 10 years. With 43% of K-12 school districts in SD opting out, the inadequacies of our school funding formula are evident.*

**21. What will happen to our school if the Opt Out doesn't pass?**

*We have always looked to our future with three plans—Plan A, Opt Out; Plan B, Consolidation; and Plan C, Dissolution of the district. If Plan A—the Opt Out doesn't pass, we can always work for another Opt Out, or go directly into Plan B and continue our consolidation talks with Armour and Parkston. Dissolving the district has never been a plan any of us wants to move forward with.*

**22. What are other districts doing to get close to the 12:1 student/teacher ratio that the state is funding us for?**

*There are only two ways to meet the ratio: increase enrollment or cut staff. Districts are not required by the law to meet the ratio, just as districts are not required by law to pay teachers the average salary of \$48,500—both numbers were just targets. According to the state Department of Education, the number of teachers a district wants to employ is a local decision. Districts retain local control on how best to use the state aid dollars they receive. The ratio does not take the quality of education a district provides, or the needs of a district like ours with colonies, Title and special education programs into consideration. The ratio was just created by simple math. There was no educational research behind the creation of the ratio.*

**23. How can almost all other districts educate their children with less [more] than the 6:1 student/teacher ratio than our district is operating on?**

*The only research we've seen on ratios is from last year that stated 80%--120 of the 150 districts in the state cannot staff at the target ratio and are staffing above the target.*

**24. If the Opt Out passes, will you have to cut staff?**

*The board is not looking to cut more staff.*

**25. What decisions has the board made to make the district run as efficient as possible with the current tax dollars and state funding it receives before it asks for more tax dollars from the tax payers?**

*We are always looking for ways to be more efficient. Currently, we've identified about \$125,000 to be cut from next year's budget including two staff positions, supplies and materials and estimated savings from the four day school week. As a reminder, during this current seven year Opt Out, staff salaries were frozen for three school years.*

**26. Why isn't minimum the best solution right now?**

*We are not looking to provide a school in name only. Our children have one chance at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade...name the grade. We want to provide the best education we can for our students. We must make our decisions based on what is best for our students' educations, not what is the least we can do for them. We do not want to provide a lesser education, which would negatively impact our students' future opportunities.*

**27. I don't understand the Overlap year. Do we pay double taxes that year?**

*Yes. In tax year 2018, we will be receiving the last of our current Opt Out revenue, plus our new Opt Out revenue. In our example in Handout #1, our house taxed at \$43,000 value will pay the current Opt Out taxes of \$65.29 plus the new Opt Out taxes of \$87.03 for a total of \$152.32 for that year. The other four years of the new Opt Out, the owner of that house will pay \$87.03 a year. By choosing the Opt Out with an Overlap year, the board is saving our taxpayers money in the long run. To meet our budgetary needs, we would have to have an \$800,000 Opt Out with no overlap to reach our goal. That taxpayer with the house valued at \$43,000 would be paying \$369.86 more with the \$800K Opt Out. That is why the board selected an overlap year.*

**28. After eliminating one teacher, what is the teacher to student ratio? Which staff is counted for calculating this ratio?**

*We do not count administrators, librarians, pre-school teachers, counselors, sub teachers or non-certified staff. Right now, we have approximately 21.7 certified FTE, which makes our ratio around 7.14: 1. The law does not require districts to meet the ratio or average salary.*

**29. Please explain state Opt Out average with Sioux Falls and Harrisburg having Opt Outs of millions of dollars and the state average of only \$402,734.**

*The total Opt Out amount in SD = \$25,775,000 / 64 districts that have Opted Out = \$402,734.38 (information from SD Dept. of Education)*

**30. Can you explain why two colony schools? Why not combine them?**

*Keep in mind that we pay the teachers and para staff salaries and instructional materials. The colonies paid to build the schools and for the upkeep of the facilities. We have not combined them because teaching at the colonies presents special challenges for our staff when working with students whose English is a second language for them. Very few colony students go on to high school, so we need to ensure each student has reached or exceeded his/her potential by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year and has the skills necessary to be a productive citizen.*

**31. How do Tripp-Delmont levies compare to neighboring districts?**

**Regular Levies**

	<b>Ag</b>	<b>OO</b>	<b>Other</b>
Armour	5.788	7.583	11.490
Freeman	6.469	8.588	12.531
Menno	4.634	6.753	10.696
Parkston	4.315	6.434	10.377
Scotland	5.758	7.877	11.820
Tripp-Delmont	5.280	7.408	11.369

**Opt Out Levies**

	<b>Ag</b>	<b>OO</b>	<b>Other</b>
Armour	1.592	4.590	9.499
Freeman	.327	.875	1.810
Menno	.323	.760	1.572
Parkston (No Opt Out)	-	-	-
Scotland (No Opt Out)	-	-	-
Tripp-Delmont (Current)	.644	1.514	3.134
Tripp-Delmont (Proposed)	.859	2.019	4.179

*-Info from County Auditors and Equalization Directors*

## Comments:

This presentation was very well explained to the public. Thank you!

For either/both of the Tripp and Delmont communities to be viable—and to ensure value to our ag land, houses and businesses, it is imperative to support our teachers, staff and students. We have great kids!

## Questions from Informational Meeting, April 6

### **32. How do you know parents are opposed to combined classrooms?**

*There has been a lot of discussion about combined classrooms, going back to the Aug. 29 Informational meeting. Many parents have talked to Board members and stated that they do not want their children in combination classrooms. In fact, many of those parents have said if we implemented combination classrooms, they would send their children to another school district. Teaching in multi-age or combination classrooms takes lots of training for even the most veteran teacher. Most districts with multi-age classrooms provide teacher support, training and development for at least an extended time and utilize team teaching. Teaching in a multi-age classroom is more difficult and demanding. With the number of standards our elementary students need to cover now—as opposed to even ten years ago—is incredible. Having one teacher teach the standards and objectives of eight core subjects as opposed to four would mean something gets short-changed in terms of time and learning. Although the Board did not conduct a parent survey in regards to combined classrooms at this point, a survey may be considered in the future.*

### **33. Is this Board still considering consolidation? Is there a district open/closed to consolidating with TD?**

*The new Opt Out has always been considered Plan A – what we would try first. Consolidation is Plan B and is still an option. Parkston and Armour have indicated they are still interested in discussing consolidation.*

### **34. Can't you come up with a plan to cut the overall expense to save the school district without an Opt Out, instead of closing the school? You knew this was coming.**

*From question 25: We are always looking for ways to be more efficient. Currently, we've identified about \$129,000 [updated] to be cut from next year's budget including two staff positions, supplies and materials and estimated savings from the four day school week. As a reminder, during this current seven year Opt Out, staff salaries were frozen for three school years. When our current Opt Out expires, and the laws that limit our ability to raise local dollars (eliminated Other Revenues fund, eliminated Pension Fund, restricted Capital Outlay fund growth and balance, restricted General Fund growth and balance) are in full force, we will not be able to fund this school without an Opt Out. This district has been frugal. It operated on basically the same budget for ten years, while state and federal demands for programs grew. So while the trend of declining enrollment was obvious, no one could have predicted the major changes to the funding formula and state aid that happened in 2016.*

### **35. What will be the teacher-student ratio in year 2023?**

*Unknown.*

### **36. If the school is out of money, why did the superintendent bring the suggestion of adding another sport – X-Country – saying it won't cost very much?**

*The superintendent was repeating a suggestion the Armour district is proposing for our sports cooperative to consider.*

**37. Why don't you allow the high school students to open enroll at the school of their choice and keep the K-8 students in Tripp?**

*The state does not allow for a district to operate solely a K-8 school district. School districts must be K-12 schools. Hutterite Colony schools are K-8, but they are attendance centers and part of districts like T-D. Once students Open Enroll, they drop from T-D and are considered students in that new district and we lose their state aid.*

**38. Will the administrators and teachers be getting raises this year?**

*By law (passed in 2016) districts must do the following:*

*"...a district must spend 85 percent of its total new money on instructional salaries and benefits. Second, a district's average instructional salary and benefits must also go up by 85 percent of the percentage increase in new money. Districts must meet BOTH of these measures in order to avoid a penalty in FY 2018." Section 27 of SB 131*

*This law pertains to teachers only. No negotiations have been started to date for any staff.*

**39. Does the Board or superintendent have key employees—teachers of mandated subjects, math, history, English, etc. for the 2017-18 school year?**

*Yes.*

**40. What is T-D's projected enrollment in five years?**

*Enrollment projections were done prior to the Board passing the four day school calendar. We are hoping the four day week will attract some new students. Otherwise, the trend has been downward for student enrollment, but we can't accurately project what it will be in five years.*

**41. Will you need another Opt Out/solution in five years?**

*Unknown. It depends on the Legislature. We will need to see the results of their study on the 2016 legislation.*

**42. Where is the proposed school budget which shows how the Opt Out money will be used?**

*School budgets are adopted in July. Opt Out money can only be utilized in the General Fund which pays salaries, benefits, supplies, and operational expenses. We will begin our proposed budget work next month.*

**43. How many students are there that are either home schooled or open enrolled that live in our school district that's hurting our enrollment?**

*This school year we have 33 home schooled students in grades K-12. Most of those students are in Amish families and have an exemption from public schools. We have seven students open enrolled to other districts.*

**44. If we reduce staff by 3 to 5 or 4, wouldn't we be able to pay our teachers more. That are with us? That's what the ½% was meant for.**

*The revenues generated by the half cent sales tax were far below what was projected; therefore, schools received .003 % increase in funding this year. Again, at this time, the Board is not cutting staff.*

**45. This past year what was your budget shortfall? What was your income and what was your expense? What was that negative balance?**

Tripp-Delmont School District Financial Statement – April 2017						
	Gen. Fund	Cap. Outlay	Sp. Educ.	Pen. Fund	Food Service	T & A Accts.
Bal. 02/28/2017	662,171.76	440,848.85	143,704.77	23,790.59	(9,261.05)	23,910.67
Taxes	57,284.03	38,113.81	26,221.50	18.67		
Investments	441.82	15.26	4.81			1.25
Student Activity						1,219.25
Admissions						
Imprest Fund						727.60
County Appt.	655.73					
Utility Tax						
Fitness Membership	130.00					
Lunch Sales					5,968.50	
Misc	179.26					
Cafeteria--Flex 125						449.16
Refund			150.00			
Federal Reimb					5,821.88	
State Reimb						
Bank Franchise	3,576.02					
State Aid	25,599.00					
FFV Grant	618.26					
Medicaid	25.80					
Transfer/Auditor Adj.						
Total Receipts	88,509.92	38,129.07	26,376.31	18.67	11,790.38	2,397.26
Mo. Rev. Available	750,681.68	478,977.92	170,081.08	23,809.26	2,529.33	26,307.93
Disbursements	155,499.44	6,558.86	23,694.38		9,368.12	8,533.61
<b>Bal 03/31/2017</b>	<b>595,182.24</b>	<b>472,419.06</b>	<b>146,386.70</b>	<b>23,809.26</b>	<b>(6,838.79)</b>	<b>17,774.32</b>

*This is our financial report from the April school board meeting. This report is printed in the paper every month with the minutes of the meeting. Food Service Fund will be reconciled by the end of the fiscal year.*

Our Budget vs. Actual Expenditures as of March 31, 2017:

Fund	Budgeted	Expended to Date	% of Budget	Revenue to Date
General Fund	\$2,119,797	\$1,386,459.70	65.41%	\$990,522.65
Capital Outlay Fund	\$760,600	\$351,428.99	46.20%	\$407,464.35
Special Education Fund	\$420,407	\$266,415.35	63.13%	\$240,984.44
Food Services Fund	\$111,190	\$86,796.24	78.06%	\$66,230.92

*The Fiscal Year ends June 30, and we have payroll, benefits and supply orders to fill at the end of the school year, so we will be closer to our budgeted expenditures in all funds.*

*School districts can't get loans from the bank, we must ask for Opt Out revenue. By law, schools can't carry a negative balance; therefore, we have been depleting our reserves which won't sustain us in the future. Although we don't currently have a negative balance, we expect to have a negative balance without a new Opt Out. Our last receipt of taxes in May should align our revenue and budget. We expect our expenditures to be at or below budget.*

**46. If the two administrators—the superintendent and the principal—have a combined salary of \$100,000—will ¼ of the proposed Opt Out go for salary? If so will they be taking \$400,000 from the district in the next 4 years?**

*Schools can only Opt Out of the General Fund (no other fund). The General Fund pays for salaries of all employees (except special education staff), so administrative pay comes from the General Fund as well as classified and certified staff pay. We don't consider the pay any staff member receives as being "taken from the district." Our staff earns their pay.*

**47. Why has the Board decided not to cut staff?**

*First of all, the Board wants to retain the quality of education we have now, not weaken it. Secondly, once you cut staff, it begins to be a slippery slope and encourages more staff to leave. There is a teacher shortage in this state, and attracting teachers to this district is difficult. There are currently 161 elementary teaching positions being advertized at ASBSD; 81 high school math and science vacancies; and 48 high school English teacher vacancies in SD. We want to make sure our staff feels appreciated and respected. Threatening cuts does neither.*

**48. What would it take for the teachers to even change to a combined classroom (i.e. time and money for extra certifications, change in curriculum, environment, etc.)?**

*If teachers have their elementary certification, no extra certifications would be required to teach in a combination classroom. Most schools select very strong teachers, as teaching in a combination classroom is more difficult than teaching in a single-level classroom due to time limitations and the number of standards and objectives. Teachers would need to be trained in managing a combined classroom, in setting up the curriculum, in understanding and learning how to teach the different objectives and state requirements for the core subjects and in understanding the benchmarks for our AIMSWeb program. Teachers would need to prepare the students for two different levels of state assessments, with different standards and requirements. Learning the lessons for two grade levels and familiarizing themselves with the resource materials would be time-consuming. Teachers in this situation would require a great deal of support and training on best teaching practices. Most districts that choose this approach staff two teachers in the combination classroom for the best results. Using this approach simply as a cost-savings means, does not always yield the best academic outcome for the students.*

**49. If consolidated with Parkston School District would there be a need for an Opt Out? If so, would the Opt Out be cheaper than the Opt Out proposed now?**

*Parkston does not currently have an Opt Out. When a plan to reorganize through consolidation is presented to the state Department of Education for approval, the joining districts must determine if an Opt Out is needed, and it must be written into the plan as Opt Outs do not carry over into the new district. In our preliminary discussions with other districts, we have not talked about needing an Opt Out for the new district; however, such determinations cannot be made until a thorough study of the assessed valuations of the property of each district combined and the financial situation of the new district is studied. It is difficult to project the need or size of an Opt Out in a consolidation without first doing the financial analysis.*

**50. Will the school do a complete survey all grades regarding multi grade classrooms?**

*Please see the response to Question 32.*

**51. What will happen if the Opt Out is not approved?**

*Please see the response to Question 21.*

**52. Isn't it true that multi-grade classrooms show no negative impact on grades?**

*The research on academic achievement on multiage classrooms is mixed and is dated, with most of it happening in the 1980s and 1990s. Generally, the positive outcomes relate to peer relationships, emotional well-being and establishment of a community. The social and emotional benefits are generally positive; however, it is not the best use for this model of instruction. The learning outcomes are mixed, and the research ranges from positive academic growth to very negative outcomes. Multiage classrooms often used as a classroom for students with behavioral and emotional needs, as long as they are not mixed in with general populations. Academic success is achieved in this model if there are two teachers in the classroom. (No cost savings.) The teachers need to be highly qualified since teaching in this model is more difficult than teaching in a single-age classroom due to time limitations, standards and the pressures of state tests. The conclusion is that this is an alternative approach to educating children whose success is dependent on the quality of the instruction and teachers.*

**53. To be an accredited K-12 school, how many certified teachers need to be staffed?**

*All teachers need to be certified in the areas they teach. We need teachers who can teach all our elementary grades and JH/HS classes. High school teachers need to be certified to teach both required and elective classes to meet the 22 credits needed for graduation. There is not a certain number of teachers you need in order to be an accredited school district. You get accreditation by meeting the curricular standards of your coursework and by having qualified, certified teachers in all your classrooms.*

**54. Does the majority rule on the vote? Or does a certain % of the vote need to be met?**

*Whichever choice – YES or NO – receives a simple majority (over 50.0%) vote prevails in this election. No super majority is needed.*

**55. If the Opt Out is denied, what factors would go in the choosing of consolidation between Armour and Parkston?**

*First of all, our non-negotiable is that we would like to maintain an attendance center in our current school. Second, we will analyze what curricular/co-curricular offerings are available for our students. If it comes to consolidation, we will always base our decision on the best interests of our students and their educations.*

**56. How many credits are needed for a student to graduate?**

*Tripp-Delmont and the SD Board of Education require 22 credits for high school graduation. Besides the required core classes in English, science, math and social studies, students also need 5.5 credits of electives, 1 fine art credit, 1 PE/health credit, and 1 vocational or World language class credit.*

**57. If declining enrollment is the main factor for our situation, what do you plan to do to increase enrollment?**

*We are hoping that our four day school week may attract a few new students. Otherwise, we know if we have a strong academic school with great staff and great opportunities for students, the word spreads. We also increased our Pre-K to four full days, hoping that those students will continue with us as Kindergarten students, which has been the case.*

**58. We just heard that we have to take education funding into our own hands because the state will not. On the other hand, we just heard the Board is trying to buy five years with the Opt Out, hoping the state will become education friendly. What are we to believe?**

**How does the Board anticipate changes in state government to be more supportive of education funding? What changes are we, in reality, expecting? In other words, what would be the basis for such expectations?**

*That is the Catch-22 that every district is in. We send legislators to Pierre hoping that they will pass laws that are in the best interest of their community schools. (Just like we hope they do the best for our counties, municipalities and the state in general.) When the majority of schools are staffing above the target ratio, paying below the target salary, and struggling to comply with the accountabilities in the new laws, we believe something will have to change. The new funding laws have restricted our ability to raise and save money—and it's negatively impacting every district in the state—not just small schools. Unfortunately, we believe that some in power in Pierre have an agenda to force small schools to close. But since no legislator wants to be the one to vote on that, they pass laws to squeeze small schools by restricting and eliminating our operating funds. We remain optimistic that our collective voices—parents and community members, school board members, administrators and staff—will reach the ears of our legislators and they will make positive changes to the laws passed in 2016. The basis of these expectations are in the three-year legislative study and in the data collected from school districts across the state on the negative impact of these laws.*

**59. You say an Opt Out is needed because state funding is dysfunctional, which is true. However, your enrollment is declining. Have you ever researched or addressed why your students are leaving?**

*Yes, we know the reasons our students are leaving. Some students leave because families move. Some students leave because they are behind on credits and believe it would be easier to obtain those credits online or at another district with different standards. Some leave due to open enrollment to another district. Open enrollment forms are legal documents that are not public documents, so the reasons that parents write on those forms for going to another district are private by law.*

**60. I don't understand the overlap scenario and how that is better than an Opt Out without an overlap?**

*During the overlap year (2018) we will be able to build up our reserves in our General Fund that we can carry over to the next school year. We will be "money ahead" the next year rather than starting the school year with less. We would need an Opt Out of \$800,000 with no overlap to meet our financial needs. Remember, the overlap year saves taxpayers dollars over the five year length of this proposed Opt Out.*

**Comments:**

Mass customized learning would solve the 4-5 student problem! High schoolers can learn in the same classroom why not. -- Teach by subject!

I'm a resident of the community of Tripp. I pay over \$3,000 a year in real estate taxes for my home and over \$1,000 a year on real estate taxes for my commercial property in Tripp. I checked with my County Director of Equalization and my taxes between my two properties would go up about \$150 a year and \$300 for the year with the overlap. To me that's worth trying to keep the school going for a few more years.

I'm talking about 1 survey, all grades, just a survey! Not enacting it immediately.

Virtual classrooms incoming or outgoing. From colleges, other schools or to homes. Frontier schools do this very thing.

These tax dollars will at least stay in our local school district.

When I graduated, I had 16 credits needed. Now it is 22 credits. How can we cut staff and meet that need...

No one here is questioning the staff of Tripp-Delmont School. Teachers are awesome! Teachers do a great job! However, the issue is that many people don't see the Opt Out as a financing solution. No one wants staff to lose their jobs.