

School District of Fort Atkinson Survey Report

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Executive Summary and Analysis Process and Methodology Survey Results Addendum: Survey 23



Executive Summary and Analysis

In an effort to more fully engage its district community, the School District of Fort Atkinson conducted a community survey to inform community members about the financial needs of the district and gauge their responses to various options. The survey was organized by the Donovan Group, a communications and community engagement firm.

A total of 681 eligible respondents participated in the survey, which is included in its entirety in the appendix. The majority of respondents, 75.9%, were parents of children who currently attend or have attended a Fort Atkinson public school. As we often find in similar surveys, there was a difference in responses among parents and staff, non-parents and non-staff, and non-students. Moreover, in most communities, non-parents and non-staff comprise upwards of 80% of the voters. Therefore, in reporting the result of this survey, we present this subgroup, referred to as the comparison group, alongside the results from all respondents.

It is worth noting that analysis was done on the reasonably sized subgroups and comparisons were made between subgroup responses and all respondents on critically important items. If there were significant differences between group responses and the group was of an adequate size, it was noted in this report.

Before proceeding, we would like to provide a general overview of the survey results. Taken as a whole, the results presented by community members in this survey were more positive and more supporting of the school district than we tend to see. The results from this survey are positive.

It is worth sharing that among the information provided by respondents for the open questions were profuse comments. It is our general sense that community members who provide a great deal of information for text questions are trustful of the district and believe that input provided to the district matters.

The survey began with a series of demographic questions. When asked, "How would you describe the School District of Fort Atkinson to someone who is not familiar with it?" respondents were effusive in the amount of information provided. Among the responses, there seem to be two themes: (1) The district is "good" and (2) in reaction to the question, "Has the district fallen behind in recent years?" the comment data included what we would describe as a theme about the district's history, in that many appeared to suggest that the best days of the district may be in the past.

When asked, "What are the School District's strengths?" respondents indicated that they appreciate teachers and other staff. Also, community members appreciate the host of extracurricular activities provided by the district. While the latter theme is often found in school district surveys, it is especially strong in the data with this survey. The music program in particular was singled out by many as a bright spot.

When asked, "In what areas could the School District improve?" two areas seemed to emerge as the most important themes: communication and curriculum.

Next, community members were asked to consider a series of items and indicate whether they felt each of the items was "Critically Important," "Important," "A little important," or "Not important." The list is as follows.

- Communication: Effective written and verbal communication (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Teamwork: Work confidently and effectively in a group (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Independence: Work productively alone; responsible for follow-though (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Adaptability: Adapt successfully to changing situations and environments, including developing the competencies needed
 for current and future roles (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed
 throughout the District curriculum).
- Critical Thinking: Problem-solving; evaluate options based on logic and fact; present solutions (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)



- Technology: Use technology effectively; critically evaluate Internet content (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Core Academics: Proficient in core academic subjects (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Career Awareness: Understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and the means to pursue a career (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum).
- Maintaining reasonable class sizes (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Attracting and retaining highly qualified staff (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Increasing State assessment scores and academic scores (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Controlling tax impact (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing adequate academic support and challenge for all students (special education students, learners of the English language, gifted and advanced learners) (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing a wide variety of elective classes to students (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing career exploration and guidance (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing appropriate levels of support and interventions for social, emotional, and behavioral student needs (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing personal finance education (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit opportunities for students to earn college and/or technical school credits while in high school (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).
- Providing industry certifications and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students in areas such as culinary, auto, nursing, child care, etc. (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items).

While there was support for all of the items and general agreement between subgroups, the two areas with the least amount of importance were those related to state assessments and property taxes. When asked if any items should be added, some respondents suggested personal finance.

When asked, "How likely are you to support a referendum to upgrade our public schools' most critical safety features?" 77.1% of the all-respondent pool supported the question. This number fell to 66.7% for non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

When asked, "How likely are you to support a referendum to maintain and upgrade our public schools' technology to keep pace with demands?" 83.2% of the all-respondent pool supported the question. This number fell to 77.2% for non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

Respondents were then asked, "How likely are you to support an operational referendum to begin July 2017?" For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support a referendum was 77.6%. This number fell to 62.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a very high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

It is important to note that while a high percentage of respondents (39.9% and 28.8%, respectively, for all respondents and the non-parent/non-staff comparison group) answered that they would definitely support the referendum, a large percentage responded with "probably." This may suggest that community members understandably desire more information about the referendum prior to election day, including how the money will be spent, likely tax impacts, etc.

Respondents were then asked, "How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in no tax increase with probable reduction in programs and services?" For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 45.4%. This number was 56.1% for non-parents and non-staff for this question.

This is an interesting result that should be considered alongside the answers to the previous questions. In a previous question, respondents indicated they would overwhelmingly support a referendum question. It seems that this option, which was presented



alongside the other options, was less favored than the others. The key differentiator for this question is likely "probable reduction in programs and services."

Respondents were then asked, "How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in a slight tax increase without reducing programs and services?" For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 80.3%. This number fell to 68.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Again, we suggest that this is a high level of support for this option. However, it indicates a need to continue engaging the community.

Respondents were then asked, "How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in an additional tax increase without reducing programs and services and addresses additional District needs?" For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 69.6%. This number fell to 59.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Again, this is high level of support. However, it indicates a need to continue engaging the community.

Respondents were then told, "The Board will bring an operational referendum question to voters. Which would you prefer?" Then a non-recurring and recurring form of referendum was explained. For all respondents, 48.1% indicated a preference for the non-recurring referendum, 22.9% for a recurring referendum, and 29.0% indicated they have no preference. Within our comparison group of non-parents and non-staff, 65.2% indicated they preferred a non-recurring referendum, 10.6% preferred a recurring referendum, and 24.2% had no preference.

In the final question on the survey, respondents were asked to "[p]lease use the space below to provide additional information you feel the Board should keep in mind as it considers an operational referendum." Two themes seemed to develop for this question. The first response seems to be a derivative of the suggestion that the district should "live within its means." The second theme is related to the recurring versus non-recurring question asked earlier.

Analysis

There are a number of takeaways that we find important. First, as noted, the survey was very positive. This point can be easy to overlook in a survey such as this.

Second, while we looked for significant differences among sizable subgroups of respondents, we did not see many such differences. Even comparing all respondents, a method that generally includes more parents and staff members and non-parent and non-staff, two groups that tend to differ, the differences were largely insignificant.

Third, there is strong support among all groups for a referendum. Moreover, it appears that community members support a higher-dollar operational referendum that would allow the district to move forward. This is an important point that bears some explanation. In some districts, the clear suggestion from community members is to cut costs, even at the risk of reducing programs and services. We are not seeing that in these survey results. Clearly, community members do not want needless spending and do want the board and administration to be prudent and responsible, but there is strong evidence in this data of the necessity of addressing "additional district needs." In our experience, it is often difficult to discern why someone selects "definitely support" versus "probably support" for an option. For our purposes, we generally combine the two items. However, the large number of "probably support" responses suggest a need for the district to continue to meaningfully engage the district community about the specific needs of the district, the process used by the board to evaluate those needs, and, ultimately, the solution that is placed on the ballot.

Process and Methodology

The School District of Fort Atkinson and its board are committed to engaging the entire district community related to the district's needs and some proposed options thereof. In May, a postcard with an invitation to participate in an online survey was distributed to all members of the district community. In addition, parents were reminded of the survey via email and articles in the local newspaper.

In all cases, participants were asked to take the survey online by following a custom survey website address. The survey opened on May 9th and closed on June 7th.



The survey was administered using the Donovan Group's survey engine. Efforts were made to ensure that all eligible respondents had the opportunity to take the survey but that no respondents took it multiple times. In accordance with best practices in online research and to protect the security of the survey, Internet protocol (IP) addresses were logged and each survey was time-stamped. There is no reason to believe that anyone has taken the survey more than once or that anyone from outside the district has taken the survey.

Finally, it is worth noting that, by design, this data is not based on a scientific sample. As such, it should be treated as qualitative data, which is similar to data from a large number of focus groups. Because we used a convenience sample, it would be methodologically inappropriate to carry out a regression analysis or attempt to calculate error.

Our response pool to date is a solid one that provides sound data to the board.

Survey Results

A total of 681 people completed the survey. For this survey, "completed" is defined as meaning that they answered all of the required questions and clicked "submit" at the end of the survey. This included 680 English surveys and one Spanish survey. In an effort to protect the identity of the Spanish-speaking respondent, the results for that survey were incorporated into the English responses to create a respondent pool.

In addition, a high–school specific survey was administered. Complete results for that survey will be provided in a separate report. All of the survey questions are included in the addendum sections. Below each of the questions, in italics, the author has provided some thoughts on the responses. The pronoun "we" is used to refer collectively to the author and his colleagues at the Donovan Group. Also, additional information may be provided for items if analysis was conducted and the findings were relevant.

Before proceeding, I would like to make a note on how subgroups will be reported in this document.

Of the 681 respondents, the majority, 86.3%, were parents. As we often find in similar surveys, there was a marked difference in responses among parents, students, and teachers versus non-parents, non-staff, and non-students. The vast majority of respondents that participated in the survey were parents and staff. In most communities, non-parents and non-staff comprise upwards of 80% of voters. Therefore, in reporting the results of this survey, we present this subgroup, referred to as the comparison group, alongside the results from all respondents. This subgroup, at 66 respondents, is a small but critically important group, and we believe it is large enough for analysis.

It is worth noting that analysis was done on the reasonably sized subgroups, and comparisons were made between subgroup responses and all respondents for critically important items. If there were significant differences between group responses and the group was of an adequate size, it was noted in this report.

The following are the questions and their corresponding responses. Where the subgroup is different from the total group or more analysis is warranted is indicated in italics.

What is your age?

18-25	1.8%
26-34	10.9%
35-44	31.0%
45-54	28.2%
55-64	14.2%



65 or over 14.0%

This question required a response. This distribution of ages is quite good. It is especially worth noting that we seek to have a fairly large percentage of respondents in the higher age groups, so we are pleased that nearly 14% of the respondent pool was 65 or older.

Where do you reside?

City of Fort Atkinson	67.5%
Township of Cold Spring	0.4%
Township of Hebron	3.7%
Township of Jefferson	2.8%
Township of Koshkonong	18.8%
Township of Lima	0.0%
Township of Oakland	2.1%
Township of Palmyra	0.6%
Township of Sumner	1.6%
Other:	2.5%

This question was required. It is the author's understanding that this distribution largely reflects that of the district. If this is correct, and when reviewed with the age data above, this suggests a representative respondent pool. Additional analysis will be conducted to determine if respondents from one part of the district differ significantly from respondents from another side of the district.

How long have you lived in the School District of Fort Atkinson?

Less than 1 year	1.3%
Between 1 and 5 years	9.8%
Between 5 and 10 years	12.8%
Between 10 and 20 years	25.6%
Between 20 and 30 years	18.4%
More than 30 years	28.8%
I do not live in the District	3.4%

This question was required.



Please check any/all that apply to you:

I do not have children	13.7%
I have children who are younger than 4-year-old Kindergarten/Elementary-school age	9.7%
I have children in 4-year-old Kindergarten	5.0%
I have children who currently attend or have attended a Fort Atkinson public school (K-12)	75.9%
I have grandchildren who currently attend or have attended a Fort Atkinson public school (K-12)	8.7%

This question was required. Again, responses suggest a good level of distribution within the sample.

If your child(ren) currently attend Fort Atkinson public schools, which school(s) do they attend? Please check all that apply.

Jefferson County Head Start or 4-year-old kindergarten at a School District partner site (4K sites are Kids Konnection, Fort Atkinson Preschool and Daycare, Parents Cooperative Preschool, and St. Joseph's Catholic Church) 4.4% Barrie Elementary School 9.5% Luther Elementary School 8.8% Purdy Elementary School (including 4K and Early Childhood) 8.8% Rockwell Elementary School 9.3% Fort Atkinson Middle School 25.6% Fort Atkinson High School 30.1% I do not have school-aged children 26.3%

Once again, these results seem to suggest that our respondent pool is distributed properly.

Please check all of the following that apply to you:

I attended a Fort Atkinson public school myself	25.6%
I am a community member who has never had children	•
attend a Fort Atkinson public school	12.2%
Lam a Fort Atkinson public school employee	16.0%



Other: 27.0%

Other responses indicated a host of other situations, including such answers as "retired" or "I have a spouse and children who attended Fort Atkinson schools."

What is your gender?

Female

64.8%

Male

35.2%

While this is a question that we do not often ask, it is our strong sense that most survey respondents are female, which makes these percentages typical. This response was not required, but 639 respondents volunteered their gender. Within our control group of non-parents and non-staff, the gender breakdown was 54.1% female and 45.9% male.

Do you rent or own your home?

Own

91.7%

Rent

8.3%

This response was not required, but 637 (updated) respondents provided the information. Within the comparison group, 94.9% of non-parents and non-staff were homeowners.

Do you vote in most presidential elections?

Yes

97.0%

No

3.0%

This response was not required, but 643 respondents provided the information. Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, 95.2% said they voted in most presidential elections.

Do you vote in most non-presidential elections?

Yes

87.1%

No

12.9%

This response was not required, but 637 respondents provided the information. Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, 92.2% said they voted in most non-presidential elections.



How would you describe the School District of Fort Atkinson to someone who is not familiar with it?

This was a required open response question. Respondents were effusive in the amount of information provided. Among the responses, there seem to be two themes. These themes are included below along with representative comments.¹

Theme 1: The district is "good."

The word "good" was found again and again in the comment data and seemed to suggest the district was generally meeting the needs of community members. But, while the word "great" can also be observed, we believe that its lack of frequency as compared to "good" is important. The following are representative comments.

- Strong, well balanced between academics and extra curricular activities. Good community support for school activities, from concerts to FFA to sporting events.
- A good district with quality programs and services. Stands out in our region.
- I think it is a good School
- I hear that they are good schools. Many activities for the students to participate in.
- It seems like a good school district. Lots of out of school activities and a great education staff.
- Quality education in a town/country environment. Well supported and close 'feeling' within the community (pride).

Theme 2: Has the district fallen behind in recent years?

The comment data included what we would describe as a theme about the district's history. Many appeared to suggest that the best days of the district may be in the past. The following are representative comments.

- A district with a proud history, one that has been attractive to families, students and the professionals who serve them. Unfortunately, historically is the key word.
- Great school district that needs to work hard to maintain past standard of quality
- A district with a proud history, one that has been attractive to families, students and the professionals who serve them. Unfortunately, historically is the key word.
- Ten years ago, I would've been proud to say that this district was the best in the area. It took pride in hiring outstanding staff members and maintaining quality programs. Currently, the district suffers from poor leadership. Because we have been too conservative in our previous referendums and because we have inadequately compensated staff members in the past, we now have a mass exodus of quality staff members leaving the district to work for other school districts or work in the private sector. If we are serious about solving this issue, it will take a TRUE commitment to compensating staff members (better than the current proposal), which will require us to ask for a substantial increase of referendum money. This means one hell of a selling job.
- I used to say the school was the "place to be" in Jefferson County. We had the best education, sports, FFA, and music programs. I believe the teachers care about the kids- but are getting more challenged with stricter rules and regulations. Today, I believe we have a great school- however, in my opinion has started to spiral down in education (Cambridge and Jefferson both making top 100 schools). I feel the spirit that used to radiate throughout the school district has faded- and the "Lead by Example" motto has gotten lost.

¹ Comments are presented in a generally unedited form. However, comments that included identifiable data were edited. Also, in some cases, only one part of the entire comment was provided.



What are the School District's strengths?

As with most districts we survey, respondents indicated that they appreciate teachers and other staff. Also, community members appreciate the host of extracurricular activities provided by the district. While the latter theme is often found by the author, it is especially strong in the data within this survey. The music program in particular was singled out by many as a bright spot. The following are representative comments.

Theme 1: Teachers are a strength.

- The teachers. The course offerings. The extra curricular activities available for kids.
- Teachers. There are lots of good teachers. Music programs. Pupil services supports. Flexibility in scheduling (to the extent possible).
- The school district has many skilled and student centered staff members that include custodial members, aides, teachers, etc.
- Awesome teachers and principals who care, good facilities.
- All nice buildings, the older staff are much more approachable than the younger.

Theme 2: Extracurricular offerings, especially music, are a strength.

- Solid connection to main educational compentencies. (IE Math, Reading, etc.) Music, arts, and selected elective programs.
- Wonderful music & Athletic programs. Lots of clubs as well.
- Co curriculars Music/Fine Arts. Always had a good math and science program. Students were well prepared for College/University after graduation. Always seemed to be plenty of choices for the students...Good facilities
- The art and music programs are incredible.
- We are very lucky to have wonderful teachers with many years of experience. We offer an amazing selection of extra curricular classes and quite a variety of clubs and organizations.

In what areas could the School District improve?

When asked about area of improvement, two areas seemed to emerge as the most important themes: communication and curriculum. The following are representative comments.

Theme 1: Communication

- Continuing communication with the local taxpayer to know why referendums are needed. I'd rather spend money in our district
 instead of sending it to Madison for them to waste. Also remembering that projects at the elementary level and the middle
 school are as important as the high school.
- The school district could improve their community involvement and offer opportunities for more students of all grade levels to give back. The district could also improve their rapport with parents and community members by improving communication as



well as involvement. In addition, the district could ensure quality relationships between administrators and teachers by creating a positive environment that starts at the top.

- better communication between parents and teachers
- Communication and transparency
- communication between staff and parents, better communication between staff and upper staff

The author finds concerns about communication to be quite common in survey responses.

Theme 2: Curriculum

- Have the Powers-that-be stop recreating curriculums every other year! The time wasted for more training (that is obsolete after one or two years) is incomprehensible and frustrating!
- Training and use of paraprofessionals, I have heard that some of the curriculum is a bit rigid, teaching still needs to be an art with choice and flexibility for students.
- Academic demands are too rigorous for our children. Childhood anxiety is increasing, largely in part to the fast paced, extensive curriculum (Units of Study) that the district has created in response to Common Core demands.
- Considering the developmental appropriateness of curriculum, whether the curriculum is truly successful with as many learners
 it should be, considering the importance of education in social sciences, science, the arts, character education, teaching selfregulation skills, and community building.
- The district should look at their lower grade curriculum. I'm sure it is in line with the State and National Standards, but to a parent it appears ridiculous

The author finds concerns about curriculum to be especially prevalent if the district has recently changed its curriculum.

Communication: Effective written and verbal communication (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important 79.0%

Important 20.6%

A little important 0.5%

Not important 0.0%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Teamwork: Work confidently and effectively in a group (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important 47.3%

Important 47.1%

A little important 5.3%



Not important

0.3%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Independence: Work productively alone; responsible for follow-though (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

54.1%

Important

43.6%

A little important

2.3%

Not important

0.0%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Adaptability: Adapt successfully to changing situations and environments, including developing the competencies needed for current and future roles (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

61.6%

Important

34.4%

A little important

3.8%

Not important

0.2%

Within our non-parent and non-staff member comparison group, the results were very similar.

Critical Thinking: Problem-solving; evaluate options based on logic and fact; present solutions (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

73.7%

Important

24.8%

A little important

1.5%

Not important

0.0%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Technology: Use technology effectively; critically evaluate Internet content (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

49.7%

Important

46.2%



A little important

3.9%

Not important

0.2%

In other surveys, we generally see less support for technology among non-parents, non-staff, and older residents. It is interesting to note that, while our comparison group's responses were similar, they indicated more support for technology. The same is true of the over-65 subgroup.

Core Academics: Proficient in core academic subjects (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

57.7%

Important

38.3%

A little important

4.1%

Not important

0.0%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Career Awareness: Understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and the means to pursue a career (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.)

Critically Important

40.7%

Important

49.1%

A little important

9.3%

Not important

0.9%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Maintaining reasonable class sizes (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important

49.6%

Important

41.1%

A little important

8.5%

Not important

1.0%

While 90.7% of our entire respondent pool said that "maintaining reasonable class sizes" was Critically Important or Important, 80.3% of our comparison group did. These are both still very high levels of support for the item.

Attracting and retaining highly qualified staff (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important



Important 22.2%

A little important 3.0%

Not important 0.3%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Increasing State assessment scores and academic scores (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 12.2%

Important 49.1%

A little important 28.8%

Not important 9.9%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Controlling tax impact (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 23.6%

Important 46.7%

A little important 23.9%

Not important 5.7%

Generally, we find controlling taxes to be more important to non-parents than parents. However, on this survey, the combined percentage for Critically Important and Important was closer than we typically see. Among non-parents and non-staff, the combined percentage of Critically Important and Important was 77.0%, compared with 70.3% for all respondents. It is often the case that we see a twenty-point difference in these populations.

Providing adequate academic support and challenge for all students (special education students, learners of the English language, gifted and advanced learners) (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 44.4%

Important 46.2%

A little important 8.3%

Not important 1.1%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.



Providing a wide variety of elective classes to students (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 28.0%

Important 52.0%

A little important 17.5%

Not important 2.6%

For all respondents, the combined percentage of Critically Important and Important was 80%. Within our comparison group of non-parents and non-staff, the combined percentage fell to 65.1%. In all cases, the percentage for this question was higher than we typically see for this type of question.

Providing career exploration and guidance (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 28.8%

Important 53.9%

A little important 15.3%

Not important 2.0%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Providing appropriate levels of support and interventions for social, emotional, and behavioral student needs (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 42.5%

Important 42.3%

A little important 13.0%

Not important 2.3%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Providing personal finance education (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 31.8%

Important 47.2%

A little important 17.8%

Not important 3.2%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.



Providing Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit opportunities for students to earn college and/or technical school credits while in high school (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 33.3%

Important 49.1%

A little important 15.5%

Not important 2.1%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were slightly less supportive.

Providing industry certifications and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students in areas such as culinary, auto, nursing, child care, etc. (Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.)

Critically Important 34.3%

Important 48.5%

A little important 14.9%

Not important 2.3%

Within our non-parent and non-staff comparison group, the results were very similar.

Do you have anything to add about the previous items (critical skills or values)?

There were no strong developed themes in the survey data. However, there was a minor theme that we felt was important to share, which is that some respondents indicated the importance of personal financial literacy.

Minor theme: Ensuring financial literacy

- Personal finance true education may be the SINGLE best thing every student, college bound or NOT (Maybe especially not)
 can take from High School. Learning to make and stick to a budget for a debt free life might just help our kids stem the
 wave of poor financial planning that has become such a threat to our way of life. (including revealing the high cost of credit
 card debt!)
- I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a sound education in personal finance before graduating high school. Please consider the Dave Ramsey curriculum on personal finance.
- there needs to be classes like dave ramsey that is REQUIRED for students to take to better equip them with their finances during and after school. these kids are clueless about how to maintain money and the math finance classes offered at the middle and high school level DONT work
- I believe ALL high school students should have an "everyday math class" meaning every student should know how to balance a checkbook, know the importance of finances for every day use
- I believe that personal finance is an elective course now. It should be required as this is a critical skill for everyone in society.



How likely are you to support a referendum to upgrade our public schools' most critical safety features?

I would definitely support it 39.1%

I would probably support it 38.0%

I would probably not support it 13.5%

I would definitely not support it 9.4%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support a referendum was 77.1%. This number fell to 66.7% for non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

How likely are you to support a referendum to maintain and upgrade our public schools' technology to keep pace with demands?

I would definitely support it 44.1%

I would probably support it 39.1%

I would probably not support it 9.7%

I would definitely not support it 7.2%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support a referendum was 83.2%. This number fell to 77.2% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a very high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

How likely are you to support an operational referendum to begin July 2017?

I would definitely support it 39.9%

I would probably support it 37.7%

I would probably not support it 11.2%

I would definitely not support it 11.2%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support a referendum was 77.6%. This number fell to 62.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Across the board, this is a very high level of support and much greater than what we tend to see for this question.

However, it is important to note that while a high percentage of respondents (39.9% and 28.8%, respectively, for all respondents and the non-parent/non-staff comparison group) responded "definitely support" to this question, a large percentage responded with "probably." This may suggest that community members understandably desire more information about the referendum prior to election day, including how the money will be spent, likely tax impacts, etc.



How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in no tax increase with probable reduction in programs and services?

I would definitely support it 20.3%

I would probably support it 25.1%

I would probably not support it 37.7%

I would definitely not support it 16.9%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 45.4%. This number was 56.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this question.

This is an interesting result that should be considered alongside the answers to the previous questions. In a previous question, respondents indicated they would overwhelmingly support a referendum question. It seems that this option, which was presented alongside the other options, was less favored than the others. The key differentiator for this question is likely "probable reduction in programs and services."

How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in a slight tax increase without reducing programs and services?

I would definitely support it 40.8%

I would probably support it 39.5%

I would probably not support it 9.4%

I would definitely not support it 10.3%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 80.3%. This number fell to 68.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Again, we suggest that this is a high level of support for this option. However, it indicates a need to continue engaging the community.

How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in an additional tax increase without reducing programs and services and addresses additional District needs?

I would definitely support it 34.2%

I would probably support it 35.4%

I would probably not support it 16.3%

I would definitely not support it 14.1%

For all respondents, the percentage who said they would definitely or probably support the referendum option was 69.6%. This number fell to 59.1% of non-parents and non-staff for this required question. Again, this is high level of support. However, it indicates a need to continue engaging the community.



The Board will bring an operational referendum question to voters. Which would you prefer?

A non-recurring referendum (the District must get permission from voters every few years to surpass the revenue limit by a specific amount)

48.1%

A recurring referendum (the District can surpass the revenue limit on an ongoing basis but is limited to a specific dollar amount)

22.9%

I have no preference.

29.0%

Within our comparison group of non-parents and non-staff, 65.2% indicated they preferred a non-recurring referendum, 10.6% preferred a recurring referendum, and 24.2% had no preference. This question was required.

Please use the space below to provide additional information you feel the Board should keep in mind as it considers an operational referendum.

Two themes seem to develop for this question. The first response seems to be a derivative of the suggestion the district should "live within its means." The second theme is related to the recurring versus non-recurring question asked earlier.

Theme 1: The district should "live within its means"

- With Act 10 the FASD has many other budgetary expenditure savings tools to look at, that they have not used to try to be fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. Extra cameras, Parking redesigns, all could be funded by changing other budget items, scaling back some employee benefits to bring in line with what the taxpayers have for expenses in their lives. Try having a 5,000 family deductable, 2,000 individual deducible plan for starters (like Mine) paying higher premiums (375 per month). How many retired teachers are still on the health plan? I want a great school, and Pay enough to already have a great school. I pay less for a private school education than FASD already gets from local tax and state aid. The quality of education is virtually the same. FASD gets more per pupil, so we have to put everythign on the table. no pet programs, etc. I really enjoy FASD for my kids (I have 7 kids- 2 graduated, 3 in the system, 2 in private school) We have paid enough. Please work harder to trim excesses. I had to cut out of our budget for the last decade. FASD can work harder to put improvements in to the operating budget. I cant go to my boss and say I need a payroll assesment because I need to put in an outdoor light and home security at my house. Use your imagination and talent in house within your means.
- First, where does the money go? Second, why do we need to spend more? Can we reduce funding in non critical areas? Can we re scrutinize the budget? I PERSONALLY would make some changes, first remove some habitual spending that isn't critical to education. Do we need to have a big football field with lots of lights for Phys Ed classes? Maybe we aren't looking in the right places to reduce the school district funding choices. SPECIFICALLY what areas have costs gone up quicker than funding has, and what areas have had spending increases been lower than the funding increases? (over the last 4 years?, the last 10 years?) Sometimes, when there isn't any more money we need to do less, and that time seems to have come 8 years ago.... given the last 2 4 year spending referendums...)
- I feel that there are other ways to decrease costs to help with necessary expenses. I appreciate the staff and the administrative staff within Fort schools. The thing is the salary of some staff is quite high (not meaning teachers). Every year it seems that costs for students increase. This gets to be much for most families. It seems that the cost for being involved in music programs is more than sports. I appreciate that you are reaching out to the community for feedback. Thank you for all that the board does.



- Live within your means...we have to do this in the public sector and I believe public institutions should be held to the same standards. I worked for a company that did not offer raises of any kind for a number of years until the industry turned around. Of course this was difficult but it was a necessity. I think the district's financial budget needs to be re-assessed by an outside source to review any further cutbacks. We shouldn't be forced to keep covering the districts shortfalls, you need to be fiscally responsible. Why are our children being used and punished because of the administrations lack of fiscal responsibility? I would like to see the salary increases/bonuses on a yearly basis for our district officials.
- I am willing to support referendums provided you have done a good job of eliminating nonessential positions. What the hell is a literacy coach? maybe if you changed how we do reading, writing, and math we wouldn't need interventionists either. Get rid of some of the top administrators too. We do not need them. They are horrible at their jobs. Good teachers make this district great, not administrators. Give your teachers a raise. Having my kids alone means they earned it!

Theme 1: Recurring versus non-recurring referendum

- I would never, under any circumstances, for any cause whatsoever including one I believed in, vote yes for a referendum that is recurring.
- I would not be in favor of recurring ref...the process of evaluating and re-evaluating numbers, costs programs and budgets is a long, hard process but one that needs to happen, the process is difficult but it I believe affords us an opportunity to revise not only our Budgetary needs and numbers but also evaluate programs to make sure we are always working toward better schools, better education at the best possible cost!
- Since I am FORCED to answer this question I selected a non-recurring referendum because why would i permit eh Board to raise our taxes at their will? What is the need for a referendum? What happened to the money GIVEN to the Board by voters in the prior referendums? The board has been given time to evaluate the passage of Act 10 and use the tools provided by the state and has failed to do so. I will not vote for a referendum.
- Although I answered non-recurring, the board just needs to stop bringing these referendums up. The school board is an embarrassment. I'm tired of the lame "state funding" excuses. The board needs to do some reasonable management of district employee salaries and benefits as well as overall headcount. A few years ago we spent over 70% of the budget on salaries/benefits and my guess is it's close to 80% if not more now. Most private businesses that do that go bankrupt.
- In my opinion the non-recurring referendum provides the public optiom as an open and transparent review. This also provides that the FA School Board is putting forth the best efforts and they are being accountable as best as possible due to the States Funding restraints allowed.

How do you prefer to receive information regarding the School District of Fort Atkinson? Please check all that apply.

Interaction with staff 37.9%

Conversations (community meetings, groups, friends, etc.) 32.6%

Meetings at schools 19.3%

School Board meetings 10.1%

Backpack stuffers (4K-5th grade) 16.0%

Newsletters from schools or the District 39.9%

District mailings 36.0%



Daily newspaper

(Daily Jefferson County Union) 47.2%

Weekly advertisers (Jefferson County

Living, Good Morning Advertiser) 7.6%

Local radio (AM - 940 WFAW,

FM - WSJY 107.3/WKCH 106.5) 11.9%

Email 60.0%

District/school website

("http://www.fortschools.org") 37.8%

Phone and/or text messages 26.2%

Video/cable, TV/webinars,

and/or recordings 5.6%

Social media (Facebook/Twitter/other) 16.3%

Other: 1.9%

This was a required question.

Do you follow the District on Facebook?

Yes 25.9%

No 74.1%

This was a required question.

Do you follow the District on Twitter?

Yes 6.9%

No 93.1%

This was a required question.



Addendum: Survey

The following is the complete survey. Note that it has been modified to fit in this report.



Dear Fort Atkinson School District Community Member,

The Fort Atkinson School Board is committed to engaging community members. For the first time in several years, we are formally surveying our school district's residents to learn what public school programs and services our community values. We may provide additional opportunities for your valuable input more frequently in the future.

The anonymous survey will be open from Monday, May 9th to Tuesday, June 7th. Each adult in our community is invited to participate. The estimated time to complete the survey is 15 minutes. An easy electronic version is available at www.fortschools.org/communitysurvey, and paper copies are available at Dwight Foster Public Library, Fort Senior Center, Fort Municipal Building, and each public school office. The survey is offered in English and Spanish. Completed paper surveys may be returned to any public school office or the District Office, 201 Park St, Monday to Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., or mailed to the District Office.

We would like to stress the importance of your feedback, which will be used by the Fort Atkinson School Board in its planning efforts to further strengthen our District in the next three to five years. Please look for a summary of the survey results which will be shared by the Board in June.

Thank you in advance for your time and thoughts. Please encourage others within the District to complete the survey as well. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jeff Zaspel, Superintendent, at 920-563-7807 or zaspelj@fortschools.org.

Sincerely,

The 2015-16 Fort Atkinson School Board Bob Chady, President Victoria Hachtel, Vice President Rodger Thomann, Treasurer Kim Patrick, Clerk Cynthia Harrington Ficenec, Member



Demographic Questions
Please tell us about yourself.
What is your age?*
□ 18–25
□ 26–34
□ 35–44
□ 45–54
□ 55–64
□ 65 or over
Where do you reside?*
☐ City of Fort Atkinson
☐ Township of Cold Spring
☐ Township of Hebron
☐ Township of Jefferson
☐ Township of Koshkonong
☐ Township of Lima
☐ Township of Oakland
☐ Township of Palmyra
☐ Township of Sumner
☐ Other:
How long have you lived in the School District of Fort Atkinson?*
Less than 1 year
☐ Between 1 and 5 years
☐ Between 5 and 10 years
☐ Between 10 and 20 years
☐ Between 20 and 30 years
☐ More than 30 years
☐ I do not live in the District
1 do not live in the District
Please check any/all that apply to you:
☐ I do not have children
☐ I have children who are younger than 4-year-old Kindergarten/Elementary school age

 \Box I have children who currently attend or have attended a Fort Atkinson public school (K–12)

☐ I have children in 4-year-old Kindergarten



\Box I have <i>grandchildren</i> who currently attend or have attended a Fort Atkinson public school (K–1	2)
If your child(ren) currently attend Fort Atkinson public schools, which school(s) do they attend? Pa	lease
check all that apply.	
 □ Jefferson County Head Start or four-year-old kindergarten at a School District partner site (4K s are Kids Konnection, Fort Atkinson Preschool and Daycare, Parents Cooperative Preschool, an Joseph's Catholic Church) □ Barrie Elementary School 	
☐ Luther Elementary School	
□ Purdy Elementary School (including 4K and Early Childhood)	
□ Rockwell Elementary School	
☐ Fort Atkinson Middle School	
☐ Fort Atkinson High School	
☐ I do not have school-aged children	
a rad not have sendor agea emiated	
Please check all of the following that apply to you:	
☐ I attended a Fort Atkinson public school myself	
☐ I am a community member who has never had children attend a Fort Atkinson public school	
☐ I am a Fort Atkinson public school employee	
☐ Other:	
Optional Questions	
The four questions on this page are optional. They may be skipped.	
We are interested in engaging the entire District community. With that in mind, we are interested in know	ving
where we need to improve communication.	. 6
What is your gender?	
□ Female	
□ Male	
Do you rent or own your home?	
□ Own	
□ Rent	
Do you vote in most presidential elections?	
□ Yes	
\square No	



Do you vote in most non-presidential elections?	
□ Yes	
□ No	
General Perceptions	
How would you describe the School District of Fort Atkinson to someone who is not far	niliar with it?*
What are the School District's strengths?	
In what areas could the School District improve?	

Critical Skills

The School District of Fort Atkinson is dedicated to helping students acquire relevant knowledge and skills that will serve students in today's complex world. The District is focused on developing skill sets that will help students be successful throughout their pre-K–12 experience and beyond. The rapid pace of change in the world has implications for the workplace, college, and for life in general. Please share your opinions about the skills our students should have at the time of graduation.

Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following skills which are developed throughout the District curriculum.

	Critically Important	Important	A little important	Not important
Communication: Effective written and verbal communication				
Teamwork: Work confidently and effectively in a group				
Independence: Work productively alone; responsible for follow- though				



Adaptability: Adapt successfully to changing situations and environments, including developing the competencies needed for current and future roles		
Critical Thinking: Problem-solving; evaluate options based on logic and fact; present solutions		
Technology: Use technology effectively; critically evaluate Internet content		
Core Academics: Proficient in core academic subjects		
Career Awareness: Understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and the means to pursue a career		

Values

The following is the mission of the School District of Fort Atkinson:

The School District of Fort Atkinson is committed to delivering the quality opportunities and services each student needs to achieve his or her academic and personal potential.

The District strives to make the most of investments local taxpayers make in their public schools in the ongoing efforts to achieve the District's mission.

Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following items.

	Critically important	Important	A little important	Not important
Maintaining reasonable class sizes				
Attracting and retaining highly qualified staff				
Increasing State assessment scores and academic scores				



Controlling tax impact		
Providing adequate academic support and challenge for all students (special education students, learners of the English language, gifted and advanced learners)		
Providing a wide variety of elective classes to students		
Providing career exploration and guidance		
Providing appropriate levels of support and interventions for social, emotional, and behavioral student needs		
Providing personal finance education		
Providing Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit opportunities for students to earn college and/or technical school credits while in high school.		
Providing industry certifications and apprenticeship opportunities for high school students in areas such as culinary, auto, nursing, child care, etc.		

Do you have anything t	to add about the	previous items	(critical	skills or va	lues)?

Safety

There are many different aspects of safety that we consider. These range from ensuring that our children learn in safe facilities to outfitting our public schools with enhanced security systems. Although the School District of Fort Atkinson goes to great lengths to ensure the safety of all students, staff, and visitors, the necessary improvements to make our buildings safer extend beyond budgetary constraints.

Some safety features are now being targeted to increase school safety, including additional security cameras, additional entrance "buzz-in" stations, etc. In order to move forward on these as well as larger items such as facility upgrades for more secure entryways, redesigned parking and drop-off areas, etc., funding would need to be approved through a referendum.



How likely are you to support a referendum to upgrade our public schools' most critical safety
features?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it
Technology
Technology is no longer an extra, it is a necessity for our students to be college- and career-ready. Resources are focused to provide all students and staff safe and equitable access to, and training in, various technology devices, software, and the Internet.
The District's annual budget does not allow for the upgrades needed for our technology to keep up with the pace of change. In order to do so, money for these projects would need to be approved through a referendum
How likely are you to support a referendum to maintain and upgrade our public schools' technology to
keep pace with demands?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it

Background Information on Funding

Please read the following background information about our District's funding and answer the questions which follow.

- Since 1994, each public school district in Wisconsin has operated under a "revenue limit" that is set by the two-year State budget. The revenue limit caps the amount of money the district can receive through local property taxes and State aid (approximately 91% of our annual revenue).
- The State-imposed revenue limit can be lifted by an operational referendum. This would allow a school district to maintain and adapt programs and services. Our District's voters approved a:
 - Five-year referendum in 2006 for \$694,000 per year that expired in June 2011,
 - Three-year referendum in 2011 for \$694,000 per year that expired in June 2014,
 - Three-year referendum in 2014 for \$1.75 million per year that will expire in June, 2017.
- Along with each of these referendums, the District made significant budget reductions and reallocations to minimize the size of the referendums.



continue to be needed to avoid drastic cuts in programming and services.
How likely are you to support an operational referendum to begin July 2017?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it
How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in no tax increase with probable
reduction in programs and services?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it
How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in a slight tax increase without
reducing programs and services?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it
How likely are you to support an operational referendum if it results in an additional tax increase
without reducing programs and services and addresses additional District needs?*
☐ I would definitely support it
☐ I would probably support it
☐ I would probably not support it
☐ I would definitely not support it
Please use the space below to provide additional information you feel the Board should keep in mind a
it considers an operational referendum.

However, like many Wisconsin school districts, the School District of Fort Atkinson will again need to turn to the voters. Until Wisconsin school funding methods change, the use of operating referendums will

Types of Referendums

The School Board will present voters with a referendum. Your answer will guide the Board in selecting the type of question(s) to ask.



There are two types of operational referendums: recurring and non-recurring.

☐ Social media (Facebook/Twitter/other)

Passage of a non-recurring referendum means the District can surpass the State-imposed revenue limit for a set number of years by a specific amount. The Board would therefore need to seek a new referendum every few years in order to surpass the revenue limit.

Passage of a recurring referendum allows the District to surpass the revenue limit by a specific dollar amount on an ongoing basis.

The Board will bring an operational referendum question to voters. Which would you prefer?*				
 □ A non-recurring referendum (the District must get permission from voters every few years to surpass the revenue limit by a specific amount) □ A recurring referendum (the District can surpass the revenue limit on an ongoing basis but is limited to specific dollar amount) 				
Please use the space below to provide additional information you feel the School Board should I mind as it considers an operational referendum.	ceep in			
Communications				
How do you prefer to receive information regarding the School District of Fort Atkinson? Pleas	e check			
all that apply.				
☐ Interaction with staff				
☐ Conversations (community meetings, groups, friends, etc.)				
☐ Meetings at schools				
☐ School Board meetings				
☐ Backpack stuffers (4K–5th grade)				
☐ Newsletters from schools or the District				
☐ District mailings				
☐ Daily newspaper (Daily Jefferson County Union)				
☐ Weekly advertisers (Jefferson County Living, Good Morning Advertiser)				
☐ Local radio (AM – 940 WFAW, FM – WSJY 107.3/WKCH 106.5)				
□ Email				
☐ District/school website (<u>www.fortschools.org</u>)				
☐ Phone and/or text messages				



☐ Other:	
Do you follow t	he District on Facebook?*
☐ Yes	
□ No	
Do you follow t	he District on Twitter?*
□ Yes	
□ No	

Thank you for your participation.