

Garden City Public Schools 2008 Patron Survey Executive Summary February 18, 2008

In January and February 2008, a 10- to 12-minute telephone survey was conducted with 400 patrons of the Garden City Public Schools to evaluate district performance, to determine where residents get their news about schools, and to secure input on 2 ideas being considered as solutions to the crowding at the high school.

Specifically, the survey asked patrons to do the following:

- “Grade” the district (A, B, C, D or F) on 20 different people, program and facility areas, plus give the district an “overall grade.”
- Share their thoughts regarding the idea of converting all the district’s elementary schools and its 2 intermediate centers into K-6 facilities.
- State their support of, or opposition to, the concept of building a second high school or building a new, larger version of Garden City High School in a different location.
- Define their tax tolerance for a potential bond issue to address the high school situation.
- Pinpoint where they turn for district news from a list of potential sources.
- Identify their demographic characteristics, including age, length of time living in the district, presence or lack of a district employee in the household (and, if present, his or her general job title), gender, and presence of a current or past district student in the household, or no district student ever in the household.

To participate in the survey, respondents had to be either the male or female head of their household, they had to be a registered voter, and they had to know that they lived within the boundaries of the Garden City Public School District.

Additionally, a geographic quota was established in an effort to mirror the general population density patterns as defined by district leadership. Specifically, 100 completed calls were allocated to 4 quadrants bisected by Kansas and Main Streets.

Generally speaking, patrons appear to be satisfied with what takes place in the classroom, but they have some modest concerns in the areas that could best be described as the “district/patron relationship.” Patrons are interested in taking steps to address the challenges associated with the high school population (and they have a preference as to how to do so), but they are also somewhat cautious about the cost.

Specifically:

- Patrons gave the district a grade of “B” or better (of the statistical equivalent of “B”) on 8 of 20 areas they evaluated. The majority of these top level grades went to the “classroom product” and those who are responsible for delivering it.

Lesser grades were seen on issues that were more focused on the district/patron relationship, such as “involving citizens in decision-making,” “ability of district personnel to answer questions and address needs,” and “district’s responsiveness to patron concerns.” These grades could best be described as modest rather than alarming, as if the patrons were saying, “It (the item being evaluated) is OK, but it could probably be better.”

Three grades did, however, fall below the midpoint between a “C” and a “B.” One item – “value for the tax dollars spent” – is routinely toward the bottom of the list on an exercise such as this. And, while the district would likely prefer that this grade be higher, it is important to note that the lower grade was the result of more “C” grades being given by respondents, not a lot of “D” or “F” marks (which would suggest significant concerns).

“Class sizes” had the second-lowest grade, suggesting that patrons recognize that the district is challenged in this area. The lowest grade was for “graduation rate,” and was a score that suggested that there is a meaningful measure of concern among patrons about this issue.

- A full 66% of patrons said they would either “strongly support” or “support” the district if it chose to convert the current elementary schools and both intermediate centers to a K-6 structure.
- When presented with the 2 options under consideration for the high school, patrons were clearly leaning in one direction.

When asked about the possibility of building a second high school, 37% said they would either “strongly favor” or “favor” that proposal, while 46% said they would either “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it.

The concept of building a new, larger version of Garden City High School was more popular, with 43% saying they would “strongly favor” or “favor” that idea, and 33% saying they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it.

While the difference in support between the 2 ideas is somewhat small, the key piece of data is the level of opposition. The second high school has, as of January/February 2008, more opponents than supporters, while the idea for a new GCHS is the opposite. Again, the differences are not overwhelming, but they do suggest the current preference among district residents.

- When asked about what their tax tolerance would be for a bond proposal to address the high school dilemma, 53% said they could support a tax increase of \$150 per year for the owner of a \$100,000 home. When opponents at that level were asked about a \$100 increase, total support grew to 56%. When continuing opponents were asked about a \$67 increase, total support grew to 59%.

While these numbers are encouraging (given the need for only a simple majority), it is important to remember that the error factor for this survey is +/- 5%, meaning that all the percentages shown in the report are +/- 5% of what they would be if *every* patron in the district had been surveyed, rather than 400. As such, actual current support at the top tax increase level ranges from 48% to 58%; at the middle level, the range is 51% to 61%.

- Patrons find the *Garden City Telegram* to be their most frequently consulted source for district news, followed by “friends and neighbors,” the district’s teachers, the Board of Education, and school principals. These results are encouraging, because they show that there is measurable interest in district activities, and that patrons are consulting the 3 primary types of sources for those updates – district-sponsored, the news media, and informal sources – rather than relying on 1 or 2 types.

The Full Report which follows this Executive Summary contains a series of findings, discussion of each finding, all related questions and answers, and appropriate subgroup analysis. A brief Summary closes the report.

Garden City Public Schools 2008 Patron Survey

Full Report

February 18, 2008

Findings

Finding 1: Garden City patrons appear to be generally satisfied with what takes place in the classroom, but they are somewhat less enthusiastic when it comes to the district/patron relationship, and they have some measurable concerns about the graduation rate.

After confirming head of household and registered voter status, and awareness of living within the boundaries of the Garden City Public School District, potential survey respondents were asked to state whether they lived north or south of Kansas, and east and west of Main. To mirror the general population patterns identified by district leadership, a quota of 100 in each of the 4 quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW) was established.

Assuming that the individual lived in a quadrant where there was still room under the quota when he or she was contacted, the survey began in earnest by asking respondents to “grade” – either A, B, C, D or F – each of 20 different people, program and facility areas of the district, plus give the district an “overall” grade.

The purpose of this question set is three-fold.

First, by asking questions at the outset that do not require the respondents to have any specific “inside” knowledge about the district, it builds confidence among the survey participants that they can take part in the process, and do so successfully.

Second, these relatively easy questions help to build rapport between the interviewer and the respondent – rapport which will be essential when the topics become more complicated later in the survey.

Third, the responses to these questions provide insight into general patron opinion about the district’s strengths and, perhaps, shortcomings. And, by comparing these results to identical questions posed on previous surveys, one can see which areas are remaining stable, improving and declining in the view of the patrons.

All the responses to each question are displayed below. However, to simplify the analysis, a weighted scale is also used.

In this scale, each grade of “A” is worth 5 points, down to each grade of “F” being worth 1 point. The points are totaled and then divided by the number of respondents who were willing to offer an opinion (meaning that those who say “don’t know” are not included).

The result is a single number between 1.00 and 5.00 that provides insight into the comparative ratings for the areas being studied. In looking at the numbers, it is best to use 4.00 as the dividing line between those areas considered strengths, and those which may require some attention. The number 4.00 is used, because to score a 5.00 would require all survey respondents who were willing to offer the district a grade to select “A,” something which – given human nature – is extremely unlikely, even in the most beloved districts.

In the case of the Garden City Public Schools, survey participants gave the district a grade of 4.00 (or its statistical equivalent) on 8 areas. Specifically:

- The opportunities available for students to be involved in school activities outside of the classroom – 4.15
- Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities – 4.14
- Performance of district teachers – 4.13
- Quality of technology available to students – 4.04
- Performance of school principals – 4.01
- Quality of education provided – 4.00
- Safety of students – 3.96
- Quality of school facilities – 3.95

This is good news, because it means that patrons feel that the “classroom product” being delivered is of high quality.

The remaining grades can be divided into 2 groups.

Group 1 consists of a series of district/patron relationship areas which achieve marks that are above the midpoint between a “B” and a “C.” In essence, these grades are the equivalent of a patron saying, “It’s OK, but I wonder if it could be better?”

Some of the areas receiving such a mark were:

- Ability of district personnel to answer questions and address needs – 3.75
- Overall grade – 3.74
- Balance of spending on academics, athletics and the arts – 3.59
- Efforts of the district to involve citizens in decision-making – 3.51

This suggests a patron population that doesn’t have a significant concern with these issues, but that seems to feel that modest improvement is both possible and desirable.

The second group – at the bottom of the list – presented 3 interesting scores.

“Value for the tax dollars spent” (3.46) is routinely at or near the bottom in districts of all sizes. However, in this case, this lower score is due mostly to more “C” grades, than it is to a large number of “D” or “F” marks. For many respondents, a “C” on an issue that is hard to accurately judge is the equivalent of saying, “I’m not sure, so I’ll just say ‘average.’”

Would it be advisable for the district to step up communication on the true value of the tax dollars being spent? Absolutely. However, this is one area where the goal should be modest improvement, because it’s unlikely that a measurable segment of patrons will ever be totally happy with their tax bill – no matter how much they understand and agree with how that money is being spent.

“Class sizes” (3.42) is the ultimate two-edged sword score. While the district would like to see any score at this level be a bit higher, it does clearly show that patrons recognize that there is a problem with class sizes. When the district makes it plans, it should focus its communications on how those plans will help in this area.

Rounding out the list was “graduation rate,” at 3.29. While no comparison data is available from other districts (because this is the first time this item has been graded in 16 years of using this exercise), this rather low score suggests quite clearly that patrons perceive this to be a concern.

In addition to the overall analysis, a further study was conducted to gauge the opinions of respondents based on where they lived, their age, how long they had lived in the district, and whether they had a current or past district student in the household (or had never had a district student). The results of this evaluation showed very few wide swings of opinion between different subgroup categories, but at least one interesting trend.

Specifically, those who lived north of Kansas and west of Main gave the highest score on 19 of the 20 areas graded, plus on the overall grade. Again, in most of the cases the score difference between this “NW” group and the other geography segments was not significant. But, when a trend is this consistent, it does suggest that residents in this area are the most satisfied.

A similar trend was seen among those who had lived in the district up to 5 years. However, it is important to point out that while the geographic segments were equal (100 each), only 21 of the 400 survey participants had lived in the district up to 5 years. As such, this “trend” is not nearly as meaningful.

There was somewhat less of a pattern among the age segments, although the younger participants (18 to 34), and the older ones (55 or older) had more of the highest scores than did the middle-aged patrons. Also, those who had had a student in the district in the past, but did not now, had the largest number of high scores among the subgroup based on the presence or lack of a district student in the household. (This modest trend of somewhat lower scores, or mildly less enthusiasm, among parents appears again later in the survey.)

All of this data seems to suggest that patrons are pleased with what takes place in the classroom, but they feel somewhat disconnected from the district in other ways. While it is impossible to judge how much of this feeling is genuine interest and how much of it is an undefined desire for more general information about the district’s inner-workings, it does appear that patrons would like to at least modestly strengthen their relationship with the district.

As you know, students in school are usually given a grade to reflect the quality of their work. Those grades are usually A, B, C, D, or F. Based on your experience, the experience of your children, or based on things you have heard about the Garden City Public Schools from others, please tell me what grade you would give the Garden City Public Schools on each of the following items. Let’s start with...

Questions 5 through 28 were rotated to eliminate “order bias,” but those with potential follow-up questions were kept together so that they made sense to the respondents. Responses on all questions may add to more or less than 100% due to rounding.

5. Quality of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	21%
B	52%
C	23%
D	1%
F	0%
Don’t know (not read)	3%

6. Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	27%
B	55%
C	12%
D	1%
F	0%
Don’t know (not read)	6%

7. Class sizes, meaning the number of students in each classroom

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	36%
C	32%
D	13%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	10%

8. Safety of students

Response	Percentage
A	25%
B	46%
C	20%
D	4%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	5%

9. The opportunities available for students to be involved in school activities outside of the classroom

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	47%
C	13%
D	2%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

10. Value for the tax dollars spent

Response	Percentage
A	6%
B	41%
C	37%
D	8%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	7%

11. The balance of spending on academics, athletics and the arts

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	52%
C	23%
D	9%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	8%

12. Why did you give the balance of spending on academics, athletics and the arts that grade? Asked only of the 132 respondents who answered question 11 either "C," "D" or "F." Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.

Response	Number
Sports gets the most money	64
Education should be a higher priority	41
Arts aren't supported enough	18
Other (see below)	9

Verbatim "other" comments

They need to separate the arts from the athletics.

Too much time spent traveling by bus for sports and contests, etc.

The majority of kids do not get to take part in athletics or arts.

I am a teacher and I am always buying stuff that I need. There is no money.

They can do better with spending equally.

I think they should have a lot more arts, music and band through kindergarten and up.

Too much emphasis on athletics and the arts. If a child does not play in a sport or have musical or artistic talent, there is not much offered.

They spend money on sports instead of education and they have a big dropout rate. Then they had to create an alternative school for the troublemakers.

It always seems like they are short of money, even though they have many fundraisers. All programs are short of money.

13. Performance of district teachers

Response	Percentage
A	28%
B	51%
C	13%
D	2%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

14. Quality of education provided

Response	Percentage
A	26%
B	49%
C	19%
D	4%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	2%

15. Graduation rate

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	29%
C	40%
D	11%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	9%

16. Preparation of students for college, vocational school, or the world of work

Response	Percentage
A	19%
B	48%
C	22%
D	5%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	7%

17. Quality of technology available to students

Response	Percentage
A	23%
B	49%
C	17%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	11%

18. Performance of school principals

Response	Percentage
A	17%
B	62%
C	11%
D	2%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	8%

19. Ability of district personnel to answer questions and address needs

Response	Percentage
A	11%
B	56%
C	21%
D	3%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	7%

20. Performance of the Garden City Public Schools superintendent

Response	Percentage
A	11%
B	42%
C	9%
D	4%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	32%

21. Why did you give the performance of the Garden City Public Schools superintendent that grade? *Asked only of the 62 respondents who answered question 20 either “C,” “D,” or “F.” Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Superintendent doesn't listen to patrons	27
Superintendent not active enough/needs to take charge	18
Superintendent is not sure what to do	12
Other (see below)	5

Verbatim “other” comments

My handicapped son was refused accommodation in high school, so we pulled him out and put him in a private school where he completed high school in two years.

I know some teachers here that don't think he is doing that great.

I don't think he listens to the personnel at all. It's his way or not at all.

He is big on buildings, not students.

He is out of touch with the type of people who live in this area.

22. The district administration's performance in addressing the educational needs in the district

Response	Percentage
A	10%
B	47%
C	22%
D	3%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	18%

23. Performance of the Garden City School Board

Response	Percentage
A	14%
B	49%
C	9%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	23%

24. Why did you give the performance of the Garden City School Board that grade? *Asked only of the 57 respondents who answered question 23 either "C," "D," or "F." Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Board does not listen to patrons	22
Board lacks direction	14
Board does little or nothing	11
Other (see below)	10

Verbatim "other" comments

They do not agree on what to do. They are not together on issues.

They need to consider input from the teachers.

In elementary and middle school, my son was treated well, but, in high school, they would do nothing to help us.

Recent events and just a general impression.

I am not happy with them trying to build another school.

They do not agree among themselves. It is confusing to me.

They don't listen to the personnel either.

They do not address the real problems of educating our children.

They should pay attention to what actually needs to be done. Don't put your head in the sand.

They seem more concerned with bilingual students than teaching English. English is my second language and I made efforts on my own to learn it.

25. Efforts of the district to involve citizens in decision-making

Response	Percentage
A	9%
B	36%
C	38%
D	6%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	10%

26. The district's record on making and fulfilling promises

Response	Percentage
A	6%
B	41%
C	17%
D	5%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	30%

27. Why did you give the district's record on making and fulfilling promises that grade? *Asked only of the 91 respondents who answered question 26 either "C," "D," or "F." Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Haven't kept their promises	32
Nothing changes/they do very little	19
Lack of follow-through	16
They don't listen to patrons	13
Other (see below)	11

Verbatim "other" comments

They push through what they want to do.

They are all politicians. They will promise you the world and give you nothing.

It is difficult to know what is actually promised.

They try to change everything, and I don't trust them.

Other parents have told us about failures in carrying out promises.

When they breach a promise, they try to hide the fact that the promise was ever made.

I have a child at Jenny Barker. Promises were made 10 years ago that were not kept on improvements to the school. Even the basic maintenance is poor. Broken windows and a leaking roof have never been fixed. Also a child was hurt due to faulty/broken playground.

This goes back to the problem the board has in coming to consensus. It creates problems.

The public interest in education and they do not keep promises with regards to that. The real action from them focuses on athletics and new buildings.

They tell us one thing and do something different.

They have faulty preconceptions on which agenda is best.

28. The district's responsiveness to patron concerns

Response	Percentage
A	6%
B	41%
C	25%
D	6%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	19%

29. Overall, what grade would you give the Garden City Public Schools?

Response	Percentage
A	10%
B	57%
C	28%
D	4%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	1%

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating for graded items

Item	5-point scale rating
Opportunities available for students/activities outside of the classroom	4.15
Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities	4.14
Performance of district teachers	4.13
Quality of technology available to students	4.04
Performance of school principals	4.01
Quality of education provided	4.00
Safety of students	3.96
Quality of school facilities	3.95
Performance of the Garden City School Board	3.92*
Preparation of students for college, vocational school or the world of work	3.84
Performance of the Garden City Public Schools Superintendent	3.81*
Ability of district personnel to answer questions and address needs	3.75
Overall grade	3.74
District administration's performance in addressing the educational needs in the district	3.74*
District's record on making and fulfilling promises	3.67*
Balance of spending on academics, athletics and the arts	3.59
District's responsiveness to patron concerns	3.53*
Efforts of the district to involve citizens in decision-making	3.51
Value for the tax dollars spent	3.46
Class sizes	3.42
Graduation rate	3.29

** On these factors, at least 20% of the respondents said "don't know," meaning that significantly fewer respondents were responsible for these specific grades.*

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating by length of time living in the district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. Bold indicates highest score in each group.

5-point scale rating	Overall	NE (n=100)	NW (n=100)	SE (n=100)	SW (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=21)	More than 5 up to 15 years (n=71)	More than 15 years (n=308)
Student opportunities outside of classroom	4.15	4.04	4.33	4.15	4.08	4.38	4.08	4.15
Upkeep/facilities	4.14	4.22	4.20	4.05	4.06	4.25	4.11	4.13
District teachers	4.13	4.08	4.19	4.11	4.12	4.33	4.08	4.12
Quality of technology	4.04	3.97	4.22	4.07	3.90	4.25	3.95	4.04
Principals	4.01	4.00	4.08	4.03	3.92	4.58	3.89	4.01
Quality of education	4.00	3.89	4.15	4.08	3.87	4.24	3.96	3.99
Safety of students	3.96	3.95	4.09	3.89	3.91	4.19	3.79	3.99
Quality of facilities	3.95	3.98	4.01	3.90	3.93	4.25	3.97	3.93
GC School Board	3.92	3.89	4.16	3.88	3.75	4.23	3.78	3.93
Prep of students for college, voc, work	3.84	3.71	4.12	3.86	3.68	4.00	3.74	3.90
GC Superintendent	3.81	3.84	4.03	3.70	3.68	4.14	3.67	3.82
Ability of dist personnel/ answer questions/ address needs	3.75	3.79	3.90	3.71	3.60	4.05	3.58	3.77
Overall grade	3.74	3.74	3.85	3.73	3.64	3.90	3.65	3.75
Administration perform/ address educational need	3.74	3.72	3.91	3.69	3.64	3.95	3.65	3.74
Making/fulfill promises	3.67	3.62	3.81	3.69	3.55	3.67	3.67	3.67
Balance of spending	3.59	3.51	3.70	3.58	3.58	3.80	3.56	3.58
Responsiveness/patron concerns	3.53	3.54	3.67	3.60	3.29	3.63	3.42	3.54
Involve citizens/ decision-making	3.51	3.50	3.62	3.55	3.35	3.84	3.44	3.50
Value/tax dollars spent	3.46	3.44	3.57	3.40	3.43	3.70	3.36	3.47
Class sizes	3.42	3.45	3.55	3.33	3.34	3.70	3.23	3.44
Graduation rate	3.29	3.31	3.40	3.34	3.13	3.47	3.05	3.34

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating by presence of current district student in the household (“Student, yes”), past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”) or no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that the “age” groups will not square with “overall” because 11 respondents refused to answer this question. Bold indicates highest score in each group.

5-point scale rating	Overall	18 to 34 (n=65)	35 to 54 (n=170)	55 or older (n=154)	Student, yes (n=137)	Student, past (n=171)	Student, never (n=92)
Student opportunities outside of classroom	4.15	4.16	4.11	4.20	4.14	4.18	4.11
Upkeep/facilities	4.14	4.13	4.11	4.17	4.12	4.13	4.16
District teachers	4.13	4.27	4.14	4.03	4.18	4.07	4.14
Quality of technology	4.04	4.07	3.97	4.09	3.99	4.11	3.99
Principals	4.01	4.10	4.00	3.97	4.02	4.02	3.96
Quality of education	4.00	4.08	3.93	4.03	4.00	4.04	3.92
Safety of students	3.96	3.98	3.93	4.01	3.89	4.06	3.91
Quality of facilities	3.95	3.91	3.95	3.99	3.97	3.93	3.98
GC School Board	3.92	3.98	3.85	3.97	3.91	3.96	3.84
Prep of students for college, voc, work	3.84	3.94	3.77	3.87	3.83	3.91	3.74
GC Superintendent	3.81	3.75	3.78	3.85	3.71	3.87	3.84
Ability of dist personnel/ answer questions/ address needs	3.75	3.83	3.71	3.74	3.71	3.78	3.77
Overall grade	3.74	3.75	3.74	3.74	3.73	3.75	3.73
Administration perform/ address educational need	3.74	3.82	3.69	3.75	3.72	3.79	3.67
Making/fulfill promises	3.67	3.61	3.75	3.60	3.76	3.61	3.63
Balance of spending	3.59	3.63	3.59	3.56	3.52	3.64	3.60
Responsiveness/patron concerns	3.53	3.90	3.60	3.48	3.54	3.54	3.48
Involve citizens/ decision-making	3.51	3.49	3.58	3.45	3.54	3.51	3.45
Value/tax dollars spent	3.46	3.56	3.51	3.37	3.48	3.47	3.42
Class sizes	3.42	3.45	3.34	3.49	3.35	3.48	3.41
Graduation rate	3.29	3.35	3.19	3.40	3.33	3.36	3.12

Finding 2: Patrons were strongly in favor of the idea of converting all elementary schools and both intermediate centers to a K-6 structure.

As a way to transition the survey from the grading section to the high school issue, patrons were introduced to the news that a group of parents, community members and district staff had been engaged in a long-range planning process, and that they – the respondents – would now be asked to react to some of the ideas that had been discussed.

The first concept – converting all the elementary schools and both intermediate centers – to a K-6 structure – was quite popular. A total of 66% of respondents said they would either “strongly support” or “support” this idea, while 26% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it. The remaining 8% said “don’t know.” Support among the subgroups was nearly equivalent, suggesting that this idea has universal appeal.

As I mentioned earlier, in January 2007, a group consisting of parents, other community members and district staff began work on a comprehensive long-range plan for the Garden City Public Schools. I’d like to share with you some of the ideas being discussed by that group to find out what you think.

30. This long-range planning group has discussed the possibility of converting all 11 elementary schools that currently serve students in grades Kindergarten through 4th grade, and both of the district’s 5th and 6th grade Intermediate Centers into Kindergarten through 6th grade schools. How do you feel about this idea? Would you say you... *Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly support it	17%
Support it	49%
Oppose it	20%
Strongly oppose it	6%
Don’t know (not read)	8%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly support” and “Support” percentages for the idea of converting to K-6 by region and by length of time living in the district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. Bold indicates highest score in each group.

	Overall	NE (n=100)	NW (n=100)	SE (n=100)	SW (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=21)	More than 5 up to 15 years (n=71)	More than 15 years (n=308)
Combined “Strongly support/Support” percentage	66%	61%	64%	70%	68%	67%	65%	66%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly support” and “Support” percentages for the idea of converting to K-6 by age, and by presence of current district student in the household (“Student, yes”), past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”) or no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that the “age” groups will not square with “overall,” because 11 respondents refused to answer this question. Bold indicates highest score in each group.

	Overall	18 to 34 (n=65)	35 to 54 (n=170)	55 or older (n=154)	Student, yes (n=137)	Student, past (n=171)	Student, never (n=92)
Combined “Strongly support/Support” percentage	66%	62%	69%	62%	65%	65%	67%

Finding 3: When asked to evaluate the 2 ideas for the high school dilemma, patrons clearly leaned more toward the concept of building a newer, larger version of Garden City High School, than they did building a second high school.

The heart of the survey presented patrons with a brief, matter-of-fact description of the overcrowding situation at the high school, followed by a presentation of the 2 ideas currently being evaluated to solve that problem: Build a second high school, or build a new, larger Garden City High School at a different location that could accommodate such a facility.

After hearing both ideas, patrons were asked whether they would be more likely to vote in favor of a bond issue if the district selected the “second high school” option, more likely to vote against, or whether it would make no difference in their voting decision. This was followed by a similar question regarding the concept of rebuilding GCHS.

The results of these 2 questions show that while there is no overwhelming choice, there is a favorite emerging.

Specifically, 37% said they would either “strongly favor” or “favor” a second high school, while 46% said they would either “oppose” or “strongly oppose” such a plan. The rest were divided among “lean favor” (1%), “lean oppose” (3%), “don’t know” (9%), and “would depend on the tax implication/what it costs” (4%).

There are two compelling pieces to this data. First, as of January/February 2008, opponents of this idea outnumber supporters. Second, only 13% of the votes (those who said “don’t know” and “would depend on what it costs”) are in play right now. Assuming an even split of those respondents at the ballot box – and that those currently in the “lean favor” camp were to vote “yes” – the measure would still fall short (at least at the time of this reading of patron opinion).

The news is measurably more positive, however, for the new GCHS idea. A total of 43% said they would “strongly favor” or “favor” this idea, while 33% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it. Of the remaining respondents, 4% were “lean favor,” 17% said “don’t know” and 3% said “would depend on the tax implication/what it costs.”

Looking at the same two pieces of data, it’s clear that patrons are – at least at the time this survey was taken – somewhat more enthusiastic about this idea. Specifically, there are more supporters than opponents. And, if those who “lean favor” were to vote that way, and half of the 20% in play went to either side, it appears that a proposal for a new GCHS would pass – at least as of January/February 2008.

What makes this difficult, of course, is that the differences between the scores were not overwhelming. There was no loud and clear winner, nor was there an idea that patrons clearly detested. But, the trend lines definitely point in one direction, as of the time this survey was taken.

Another one of the topics discussed by the group was how to address the challenges associated with the large student population at the high school. As you may know, Garden City High School has had 13 separate additions during its lifetime, and at the present time, there are 11 classrooms in trailers on the campus. At its present location, there is no additional room for expansion at the high school.

As such, one of the alternatives being considered is to build a second high school, while the other alternative is to stay with one high school by building a new, larger version of Garden City High School at another location within the district.

31. If the district proposed in a future bond issue proposal to build a second high school, instead of staying with one high school by building a new, larger version of Garden City High School at another location within the district, do you think you would strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the bond issue? “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” “Don’t know,” and “Would depend on the tax implication” were not read but were noted if mentioned, unaided, by the respondent. Those who answered “Don’t know” or “Would depend on the tax implication” skipped to question 34.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	14%
Favor	23%
Lean favor (not read)	1%
Lean oppose (not read)	3%
Oppose	28%
Strongly oppose	18%
Don’t know (not read)	9%
Would depend on the tax implication (not read)	4%

32. Why do you feel that proposing to build a second high school would make you more likely to vote in favor of a bond issue? *Asked only of the 152 respondents who answered “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor” on question 31. After answering this question, respondents then skipped to question 34. Numbers, rather than percentages displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Would make class sizes smaller/reduce overcrowding	53
Would be easier to operate and maintain	25
The current building is old	24
More opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities	22
Population is growing	17
Other (see below)	11

Verbatim “other” comments

Giving the kids newer and better things would benefit all.

Another school would be great for the city and would give the kids more individual attention.

Two high schools work a lot better than one.

It would mean less students and would be safer and good for the teachers.

It would make sense to build it with an automotive shop, welding, woodwork, plumbing, etc. We were at another district where students built a basic house and sold it to benefit the district.

It would have smaller student populations, and students would get individual learning and would be more likely to have more extracurricular activities.

The high school is one of the largest in Kansas. Huge size dilutes quality of education. I taught for many years.

We would not have to travel so far for sports events.

I will vote in favor of either one. Something needs to be done, but it is difficult to leave the old school because I graduated from there.

They need to get out of the trailers and be in a building.

It would equalize the population in schools.

33. Why do you feel that proposing to build a second high school would make you more likely to vote against a bond issue? *Asked only of the 196 respondents who answered “Lean oppose,” “Oppose” or “Strongly oppose” on question 31. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Would create rivalry	56
Friends would be separated	38
Population isn't big enough to support 2 schools	31
Prefer to expand/use current building	26
Other (see below)	26
Would mean increased costs to staff and maintain	19

Verbatim “other” comments

Need to stay with 1 high school.

I believe students need to go year-round.

We don't have the finances as a county to build another school.

They just need to get the freshman back in the middle schools, and it would alleviate a lot of the problem.

It would cost too much and raise taxes by too high an amount.

Remove the freshman classes from the high school. There is sufficient land around the high school.

Should just stay with 1 high school.

We have voted three times. We don't want a building with fancy designs. We want a school building for education.

We do not need the competition that would result. We need to compete with other districts, not each other.

I think they should bring all the grades together.

They do not know how to operate a high school.

I don't want 2 schools.

Driving so far to get to school may be hard for some. It might also create division in community.

We have enough gang violence; we don't need to separate them anymore.

Tax dollars will be wasted.

I don't think we need a second huge high school. It wouldn't cut down on class size.

We don't need a second high school. Take the freshman out of the high school and put them in the middle school.

The graduation rate is so low that I am not going to spend my money and have the kids not stay in school.

We have 2 middle schools. One is perceived as getting preferential treatment. We don't need that again.

The economy is bad. We need to watch our p's and q's and not be taxed.

Increased taxes and the fact that we don't need another high school.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both options.

I don't agree with the way they have gone about doing this in the first place.

It would double the expenses. Our dropout rate is so high that actually the 11th and 12th grades have small numbers of students today.

They don't have the number of teachers to split schools. The quality of teachers is low with 1 school. So, what will they do with 2 schools?

We went through this in the past, and I don't want to do this again.

34. What if, instead, the district proposed a bond issue to build a new, larger version of Garden City High School at another location within the district, rather than building a second high school? Do you think you would strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the bond issue? *“Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” “Don’t know,” and “Would depend on the tax implication” were not read but were noted if mentioned, unaided, by the respondent. Those who answered “Don’t know” or “Would depend on the tax implication” skipped to question 37.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	7%
Favor	36%
Lean favor (not read)	4%
Lean oppose (not read)	0%
Oppose	24%
Strongly oppose	9%
Don’t know (not read)	17%
Would depend on the tax implication (not read)	3%

35. Why do you feel that proposing to build a new, larger version of Garden City High School at another location within the district would make you more likely to vote in favor of a bond issue? *Asked only of the 187 respondents who answered question 34 either “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor.” After answering this question, respondents skipped to question 37. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Keep united community spirit	60
Keep the kids together	51
School is overcrowded as it is	32
Other (see below)	24
Cheaper to run one school	20

Verbatim “other” comments

Whatever they decide, they need to do it, because the situation they are in now is not healthy.

I probably like this even better, because everyone stays together and if it’s built right it could accommodate all needs.

The school needs to be updated, but make sure there is only 1 school.

It really doesn't matter as long as something is done.

I am willing to go along with this option as well. We need the room.

They need any room they are willing to make.

The athletic teams would be stronger as a whole instead of dividing up the talent.

I prefer the second building, but would go along with this.

I just think it would help morale and be better to have 1 larger high school.

I would agree to this as well.

Something is needed.

Something has to be done.

If it adds more room, I'm for it.

Keeps the conflicts down by not giving other reasons for rivalry. We already have too many fights.

I would vote in favor of either option. It is needed.

I would rather have the new high school than having 2, which would cut down on the rivalry among the schools.

I would go along with it, but I wonder what they will do with the old school?

This would offer more opportunities to enrich curriculum and maintain a spirit of unity at same time.

I would vote either way.

I am willing to go with this choice, too.

When Tyson closes its doors, Garden City will be a lot lower in population.

As long as it's big enough to hold everyone.

I would go along with this as well, but it's not my first choice.

If I have no choice, this is better option. I would, however, prefer to do nothing and keep the school where it is.

36. Why do you feel that proposing to build a new, larger version of Garden City High School at another location within the district would make you more likely to vote against a bond issue? *Asked only of the 131 respondents who answered question 34 either “Lean oppose,” “Oppose,” or “Strongly oppose.” Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
One school would not be big enough	45
Don't want the costs/tax burden	38
Prefer just expanding the current school	31
Other (see below)	17

Verbatim “other” comments

The school district already has too many facilities.

The number of students is going down in the past year, so we don't need it.

Bigger is not always better.

A large school creates operational problems and increased expenses.

I am more against who they would get to build it.

It doesn't reduce class size.

Again, they do not know how to operate a high school.

It would be better to have 2 schools so more kids can have opportunities to be involved with the arts, sports etc. But something should be done.

I just like the other idea better.

I haven't heard anything about what would happen to the old school. Too much money to just be sitting.

It would waste the money spent on remodeling the cafeteria and football field.

We need to raise the graduation rate before we throw more money at it.

Huge size is a detriment.

Same reason. Garden City is going to get smaller. Some businesses are closing now.

It doesn't bother the students to be in the trailers, so why is it bothering everybody else?

We need to focus on a smaller high school, because we are not growing fast enough in our community.

I want them to get quality teachers before they add or build a second school.

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly favor” and “Favor” percentages for a second high school and for a new, larger version of GCHS by region and by length of time living in the district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. Bold indicates the highest score in each group.

Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage	Overall	NE (n=100)	NW (n=100)	SE (n=100)	SW (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=21)	More than 5 up to 15 years (n=71)	More than 15 years (n=308)
Second high school	37%	40%	42%	37%	30%	38%	45%	35%
New GCHS	43%	41%	40%	45%	44%	62%	44%	41%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly support” and “Support” percentages for a second high school and for a new, larger version of GCHS by age, and by presence of current district student in the household (“Student, yes”), past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”) or no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that the “age” groups will not square with “overall,” because 11 respondents refused to answer this question. Bold indicates the highest score in each group.

Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage	Overall	18 to 34 (n=65)	35 to 54 (n=170)	55 or older (n=154)	Student, yes (n=137)	Student, past (n=171)	Student, never (n=92)
Second high school	37%	37%	35%	39%	37%	36%	39%
New GCHS	43%	48%	43%	39%	41%	42%	46%

Finding 4: When asked about their tax tolerance, patrons sent a signal that they are ready to support a solution to fix the challenges at the high school, but they will also be paying close attention to the cost.

Having now shared their thoughts about the wisdom of the two ideas for the high school, survey respondents were asked to identify their tax tolerance via a series of three questions.

Specifically, participants were asked whether they would support a proposal that resulted in a tax increase of \$150 per year for the owner of a \$100,000 home in the district. Those who said they would “strongly favor” or “favor” that level skipped the remaining tax questions, under the assumption that if they supported this level, they would support a lower one as well.

Those who were in opposition at \$150 per year were asked about a \$100 tax increase. Those who became supportive at that level skipped the remaining tax question, while those still in opposition were asked about a \$67 a year increase.

The objective of this approach is to determine if there is a “line in the sand” that patrons draw and, in effect, say “No matter how much I like the proposal, this is all I am willing (or able) to pay.” Jumps in support of 5% or more between the tax levels seem to suggest that there is a “magic number” in the minds of patrons, while smaller jumps suggest that patrons will make their decision as much on the basis of the proposal as they will on the tax increase (assuming that increase is not seen as exorbitant).

In the case of the Garden City Public Schools, the news is somewhat mixed.

Support at the \$150 level was 53% (combined “strongly favor” and “favor”). At the \$100 level, it increased to 56%, while at the \$67 level, it grew to 59%.

The subgroup analysis produced some particularly interesting results.

Specifically:

- Those in the SE quadrant of the district were the most supportive at each of the tax levels, with those in the NW close behind.
- The small group of relatively new residents (less than 5 years) were the most supportive at each tax level.
- The middle-aged group was the most supportive at the middle and smallest tax level, and was just nudged out by the older respondents at the highest level.
- Current parents were the *least* supportive at all 3 tax levels, while those who had never had a child in the district were the *most* supportive.

While that last bullet is somewhat disappointing, the results overall are generally encouraging for an election that requires only a simple majority to pass. However, it is important to remember two things.

First, the error factor for this survey is +/- 5%. This means that, according to statistical formulas, the results in this survey are within 5% of what they would be if *every* patron were surveyed, rather than just 400.

As such, the support level actually falls somewhere between 48% and 58% (at the \$150 level), 51% and 61% (\$100), and 54% and 64% (\$67), meaning that no matter how the district decides to proceed, there is work to be done to solidify and grow the support that is evident today.

Second, this survey was taken months before any bond election will take place, during a presidential election year, and in the midst of an uncertain economy. Much can and will change between now and when patrons step into a voting booth to cast a ballot on a school bond issue. The district cannot know today whether those changes will be positive or negative and, as such, should consider this data as a starting point to assist in planning a solid proposal that is crisply presented to patrons from the time that the decision is finalized up until the day that votes are cast.

37. What if the proposal resulted in a tax increase of 150 dollars per year, or about 12 dollars and 50 cents per month for the owner of a \$100,000 home in the district? Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this bond issue? “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose” and “Don’t know” were not read but were noted if mentioned, unaided, by the respondent.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	6%
Favor	47%
Lean favor (not read)	3%
Lean oppose (not read)	0%
Oppose	32%
Strongly oppose	4%
Don’t know (not read)	8%

38. What if the proposal resulted in a tax increase of 100 dollars per year, or about 8 dollars and 40 cents a month for the owner of a \$100,000 home in the district? Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this bond issue? *Asked only of the 178 respondents who did not answer question 37 either “Strongly favor,” “Favor” or “Lean favor.” (Those who did skipped to question 42.) Percentages shown below for “Strongly favor” and “Favor” represent the combined scores for questions 37 and 38, under the assumption that those who supported a higher tax level would also support a lower level.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	6%
Favor	50%
Lean favor (not read)	3%
Lean oppose (not read)	1%
Oppose	30%
Strongly oppose	3%
Don’t know (not read)	8%

39. What if the proposal resulted in a tax increase of 67 dollars per year, or about 5 dollars and 60 cents per month for the owner of a \$100,000 home in the district? Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this bond issue? *Asked only of the 164 respondents who did not answer question 38 either “Strongly favor,” “Favor” or “Lean favor.” (Those who did skipped to question 42.) Percentages shown below for “Strongly favor” and “Favor” represent the combined scores for questions 37, 38 and 39, under the assumption that those who supported a higher tax level would also support a lower level.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	6%
Favor	53%
Lean favor (not read)	5%
Lean oppose (not read)	1%
Oppose	26%
Strongly oppose	3%
Don’t know (not read)	7%

40. Why, specifically, do you believe you would vote against such a proposal, if the election were held today? *Asked only of the 116 respondents who answered question 39 either “Lean oppose,” “Oppose,” or “Strongly oppose.” Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Those who answered this question then skipped to question 42. Answers below were coded from open-ended responses provided by patrons.*

Response	Number
Don't want a tax increase	94
Not needed	17
Other (see below)	5

Verbatim “other” comments

Why waste my money on incompetent management?

I have no desire to spend more money on them.

I would like them to find alternative funding rather than raising our taxes.

They need to focus on teaching. Forget building.

Get good teachers first.

41. What information would you need to know to make a decision? *Asked only of the 28 respondents who answered question 39 “Don't know.” Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Don't know	8
Haven't thought about it yet	8
Need more details	6
Exactly how much it will cost	2
Where the new school would be built	2
Other (see below)	2

Verbatim “other” comments

Is there another option for getting money?

I don't really trust how the money would be spent and would want to know that.

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly favor” and “Favor” percentages at each tax level by region and by length of time living in the district. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. Bold indicates the highest score in each group.

Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentages	Overall	NE (n=100)	NW (n=100)	SE (n=100)	SW (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=21)	More than 5 up to 15 years (n=71)	More than 15 years (n=308)
\$150 per year	53%	49%	54%	58%	48%	62%	56%	50%
\$100 per year	56%	51%	60%	61%	50%	67%	59%	54%
\$67 per year	59%	54%	63%	64%	54%	71%	62%	57%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly favor” and “Favor” percentages at each tax level by age, and by presence of current district student in the household (“Student, yes”), past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”) or no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that the “age” groups will not square with “overall,” because 11 respondents refused to answer this question. Bold indicates the highest score in each group.

Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage	Overall	18 to 34 (n=65)	35 to 54 (n=170)	55 or older (n=154)	Student, yes (n=137)	Student, past (n=171)	Student, never (n=92)
\$150 per year	53%	46%	52%	53%	48%	52%	59%
\$100 per year	56%	48%	57%	56%	52%	55%	63%
\$67 per year	59%	49%	61%	60%	56%	58%	65%

Finding 5: The *Garden City Telegram* newspaper is the clear number 1 source of district news, followed by “friends and neighbors,” Garden City school teachers, Garden City School Board, and Garden City principals.

The final substantive section of the survey presented 16 different news sources and asked respondents whether they consulted each one “frequently,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never,” for district information.

To assist in the evaluation, a 4-point weighted scale is used, in which each “often” vote is worth 4 points, down to each “never” vote being worth 1. The points are totaled, and then divided by 400 (“don’t know” was not an option available to respondents) to arrive at a number between 1.00 and 4.00.

In the case of this scale, 2.00 is the dividing line. Any source that scores above 2.00 is consulted more often than “rarely,” meaning it is one which should be a focus of the district’s communication efforts for any ballot issue.

For the Garden City Public Schools, 5 sources achieved the 2.00 level (or the statistical equivalent):

- *Garden City Telegram* newspaper – 3.38 (meaning it is consulted more often than “sometimes”)
- “Friends and neighbors” – 2.97
- Garden City school teachers – 2.47
- Garden City School Board – 1.98
- Principals at Garden City Public Schools – 1.96

These results are interesting, in that “friends and neighbors” is typically – though not always – the most frequently consulted source. Clearly, the local newspaper is held in high regard.

Also, this is the highest score ever for a School Board in 16 years of conducting this exercise in districts of all sizes in Kansas and Missouri. This would suggest that BOE members are well-known throughout the community, and are often quoted in the newspaper.

The most encouraging news, however, is that all three types of media – third-party (the newspaper), unofficial (“friends and neighbors”) and district-sponsored – are consulted on a routine basis. This means that no matter what method is used to transmit information to the patron population about the final bond proposal, its chances of being received appear to be strong.

And, finally, I'm wondering who you turn to for information about the activities of the Garden City Public Schools. For each of the people or organizations I mention, please tell me whether you look to them frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never for information about the Garden City Public Schools. Let's start with... Questions 42 through 57 were rotated, but 45 and 46 were kept together so that they made sense to the respondent.

42. The Garden City Telegram newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	62%
Sometimes	23%
Rarely	6%
Never	9%

43. La Semana newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	2%
Sometimes	7%
Rarely	9%
Never	82%

44. Radio stations that cover Garden City Public Schools news

Response	Percentage
Frequently	11%*
Sometimes	12%*
Rarely	12%
Never	66%

* Those who said "Frequently" or "Sometimes" were asked to identify the station they listen to for district news; 53 said KIUL, 22 said KANZ, 15 said 97.3, 1 said KBUF

45. Buffalo Broadcasting System, cable channel 21

Response	Percentage
Frequently	17%
Sometimes	13%
Rarely	9%
Never	61%

46. Other television stations that cover Garden City Public Schools news

Response	Percentage
Frequently	8%*
Sometimes	4%*
Rarely	11%
Never	78%

** Those who said “Frequently” or “Sometimes” were asked to identify the station they watch for district news; 17 said ABC, 13 said NBC, 11 said CBS, 2 said Channel 11, 2 said Channel 6, 1 said Channel 8*

47. The Garden City School Board – either in person or through news stories in which board members are quoted

Response	Percentage
Frequently	12%
Sometimes	18%
Rarely	26%
Never	44%

48. Principals at Garden City Public Schools

Response	Percentage
Frequently	14%
Sometimes	21%
Rarely	12%
Never	53%

49. Garden City School District administration – either in person or through news stories in which the superintendent and others in administration are quoted

Response	Percentage
Frequently	6%
Sometimes	24%
Rarely	14%
Never	57%

50. Garden City school teachers

Response	Percentage
Frequently	31%
Sometimes	21%
Rarely	13%
Never	36%

51. Garden City school support staff members, such as secretaries, custodians, food service workers and paraprofessionals

Response	Percentage
Frequently	17%
Sometimes	16%
Rarely	8%
Never	59%

52. The Sugar Beet high school newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	5%
Sometimes	4%
Rarely	14%
Never	77%

53. Friends and neighbors

Response	Percentage
Frequently	39%
Sometimes	31%
Rarely	18%
Never	12%

54. The Parent Teacher Organization, also known as the PTO

Response	Percentage
Frequently	7%
Sometimes	11%
Rarely	5%
Never	79%

55. The High School Booster club

Response	Percentage
Frequently	3%
Sometimes	10%
Rarely	7%
Never	81%

56. Newsletters from individual school buildings in the district

Response	Percentage
Frequently	10%
Sometimes	21%
Rarely	8%
Never	61%

57. Garden City Public Schools Web site

Response	Percentage
Frequently	11%
Sometimes	14%
Rarely	9%
Never	66%

Cross-tabulation: 4-point scale rating for news sources

News source	4-point scale rating
<i>Garden City Telegram</i> newspaper	3.38
Friends and neighbors	2.97
Garden City school teachers	2.47
Garden City School Board	1.98
Principals at Garden City Public Schools	1.96
Garden City school support staff members	1.90
Buffalo Broadcasting System, cable channel 21	1.87
Newsletters from individual school buildings	1.80
Garden City School District Administration	1.79
Garden City Public Schools Web site	1.71
Radio stations that cover Garden City Public Schools news	1.68
Parent Teacher Organization, also known as the PTO	1.45
Other television stations that cover Garden City Public Schools news	1.41
The Sugar Beet high school newspaper	1.38
High School Booster club	1.35
<i>La Semana</i> newspaper	1.29

Finding 6: The survey group consisted of mostly long-term residents, but had a good mix of ages, and solid groups of individuals with varying levels of district experience.

While the questions related to head of household and registered voter status, and knowledge of living within the district’s boundaries, were requirements (as was that the respondent had to live in a quadrant where there was still room under the quota when the individual was contacted), the other demographic questions were left to the random digit dialing process.

As is almost always the case, this produces a survey group that is extremely representative of the demographic characteristics of the patron population. In the case of the Garden City Public Schools, the survey group:

- Was dominated (78%) by those who had lived in the district more than 15 years
- Featured a good mix of younger (17%, ages 18 to 34), middle-aged (43%, ages 35 to 54), and older (38%, ages 55 or older) respondents, with 3% refusing to answer this question
- Had 137 respondents who currently have a child in a district school, 171 who had had a child in a district school in the past but who did not now, and 92 who had never had a child in a GCPS school.

My last few questions will also help us divide our interviews into groups.

58. How long have you, yourself, lived within the boundaries of the Garden City Public Schools? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents*

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	1%
2 years to 5 years	4%
More than 5 years up to 10 years	7%
More than 10 years up to 15 years	11%
More than 15 years	54%
I’ve lived here all my life	24%

59. In what age group are you? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents. "Refused" was not read.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	2%
25 to 34	15%
35 to 44	19%
45 to 54	24%
55 to 64	22%
65 or older	16%
Refused (not read)	3%

60. Are you, or is anyone in your immediate household, employed by the Garden City Public Schools?

Response	Percentage
Yes	6%
No	95%

61. In what capacity is this person employed? Is it...*Asked only of the 22 respondents who answered question 60 "yes." Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Most likely choices were read to respondents. Only those answer choices selected by at least 1 respondent displayed below.*

Response	Number
Classroom teacher	13
Paraprofessional	2
Secretarial staff	2
Administrative staff	2
Transportation staff	1
"Classroom support staff"	1
"Permanent substitute teacher"	1

62. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend school in the Garden City Public Schools right now? *Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	128
Yes, children and grandchildren	9
Yes, grandchildren	42
No	221

63. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated? *Asked only of the 263 respondents who did not say “Yes, children,” or “Yes, children and grandchildren” on question 62. (Those who did skipped to question 65.) Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	147
Yes, children and grandchildren	24
Yes, grandchildren	2
No	90

64. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend private or parochial school right now or who are home-schooled? *Asked only of the 92 respondents who did not say “Yes, children,” or “Yes, children and grandchildren” on question 63. (Those who did skipped to question 65.) Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	21
Yes, children and grandchildren	0
Yes, grandchildren	4
No	67

65. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	56%
Male	45%

Summary

The January/February 2008 survey of 400 patrons of the Garden City Public Schools shows a population that:

- Appears to be satisfied with the “classroom product” being delivered by the district, but would like to feel a bit more connected to the district and its decision-making
- Has a meaningful level of concern about the current graduation rate
- Likes the idea of converting all the elementary schools and both intermediate centers into K-6 facilities
- Recognizes the need to address the crowding issue at the high school
- Is more interested – at least as of the time this survey was taken – in the idea to build a newer, larger version of Garden City High School than they are in building a second high school facility
- Is cautiously supportive of a variety of potential tax increase levels
- Regularly consults several sources for district news

History suggests that a school district increases its chances for success in a bond or levy proposal if its patrons:

- Believe the district is doing a good job
- Like the ideas being proposed well enough to pay for them
- Are interested enough in district news to regularly seek updates from a variety of sources

In the case of the Garden City Public Schools the results are mostly positive, with some mixed signals.

Clearly, patrons like what’s taking place in the classroom, but (as stated earlier) their enthusiasm isn’t as strong in several other areas. And, one has to wonder about the irony of feeling good about the educational product, but having such strong concerns about the graduation rate.

In terms of the high school idea, they are not overwhelmed by either proposal, but clearly favor the concept of recreating GCHS so that the unified spirit extant in a one high school community can remain. They seem somewhat willing to pay to address this issue, but they clearly will want to feel confident that the solution being proffered is the best one, for the lowest possible cost.

They are quite interested in the goings on in the district, and tend to rely on a handful of trusted sources for school updates. The good news here is that those sources include the news media, their friends and neighbors, and district personnel, meaning that they are not relying on only 1 type of outlet.

Overall, the mood appears to show that the community is ready to take action on the high school issue. Even many of those who disliked one of the ideas said, in essence, “Something has to be done.”

To increase the chance of success on Election Day, it appears that it will be critical for the district to:

- Come to a final recommendation, and affirm that this is a unified decision that represents the best solution identified through careful study and deliberation.
- Create a solid, fact-based, benefit-driven communications program about that proposal that clearly shows the due diligence that was undertaken, and then consistently present this information from the point when the final proposal decision is made up until Election Day.