

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for:

Lake of the Woods School District

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School Communications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last several months, the Lake of the Woods School District has been evaluating its building and facility, capital maintenance, and operating needs to investigate possible solutions to sustain a strong educational system for students and families.

The School Board asked school district residents to participate in a survey to evaluate the district's needs, consider preliminary solutions, and contribute feedback to guide next steps. This included their opinion as the district works toward a capital projects levy for additional revenue for the acquisition and betterment of the school, including technology and curriculum needs and bus purchases; a building bond referendum for facility improvements; a referendum for additional operating revenue.

An anonymous survey was made available to all district residents from June 18 to June 30, 2024. To encourage residents to take the survey, the school district used multiple communication tools to remind community members to complete it while it was open.

This report summarizes survey responses and an analysis from the Donovan Group team.

PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

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. Following best practices in online research and protecting the security of the survey, internet protocol (IP) addresses were logged, and each response was time-stamped.

While we do not detail our specific survey security protocols, if we have reason to believe that anyone has taken the survey more than once or that there is fraud, we remove those responses. We set aside five completed surveys due to duplicate responses and other factors.

It is worth noting that, by design, this data is not based on a scientific sample. Therefore, it should be treated as qualitative data similar to data from focus groups. Because we used a convenience sample, conducting a regression analysis or attempting to calculate error would be methodologically inappropriate. However, our response pool is solid and provides sound data to the administration and the school board.

SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 278 respondents completed the survey. To complete the survey, respondents must have clicked "submit" at the end of the online survey. Paper copies were available for anyone who preferred that method, but no completed paper surveys were submitted.

There are two data sets for some of the questions or statements later in the survey.

- The first column reflects the responses of all completed surveys.
- The second column indicates responses from a comparison group of district residents who are not current parents of preschool or school-aged students, employees, or students. The comparison group does include parents of former district students. We typically find the comparison group to represent the general population more accurately than all respondents. There were 81 completed results in the

comparison group, representing 29.1% of the total respondents. The responses of this comparison group differed significantly from the overall response pool for some questions, as noted in the analysis of those questions.

Below are the questions/statements and their corresponding responses. A brief analysis from the Donovan Group team is included under each question/statement and result. Questions/statements with an asterisk (*) were required.

1 What is your age?*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
18-25	1.08%	2.47%
26-34	12.59%	1.23%
35-44	34.17%	6.17%
45-54	25.18%	20.99%
55-64	12.23%	25.93%
Over 65	14.75%	43.21%

Analysis:

Generally, we find that those 65 and older tend to be under-represented in school district surveys. We are pleased that the all-respondent group included approximately 52.2% of those 45 and older. It is also typical for the comparison group to skew older than the larger group of respondents, which is the case here; approximately 79.1% of the comparison group was 55 or older.

Overall, the survey received a healthy balance of respondents across age groups 26 and older, although we certainly would have liked to see more participation from those ages 25 and younger.

2 Choose the one that best describes where you reside.*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
City of Baudette	34.53%	34.57%
City of Williams	6.12%	4.94%
North of Highway 11	28.06%	39.51%
South of Highway 11	23.38%	19.75%
Other	7.91%	1.23%

Analysis:

We understand that this distribution largely mirrors the district's population and represents a good respondent pool.

There were 22 respondents who selected Other, which included Birchdale (1), City of Roosevelt (1), Clementson (1), East (1), East of Highway 11 (3), East of Baudette (1), Graceton (1), Morris Point (1), Pitt (1), Roosevelt area (2), Southeast Highway 11 (1), and Swift area (2). Six respondents did not share additional information.

3 How long have you lived in the Lake of the Woods School District?*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
Less than 2 years	1.44%	1.23%
Between 2 and 5 years	6.83%	3.70%
Between 5 and 10 years	11.51%	4.94%
Between 10 and 20 years	21.58%	16.05%
Between 20 and 30 years	18.71%	16.05%
More than 30 years	33.81%	58.02%
I do not live in the district	6.12%	0.00%

Analysis:

We often find that newer residents and those who have lived for a long time in the school district tend to differ significantly in their perceptions and opinions. While we would have liked to see a few more responses from those who lived in the district for five years or fewer, this pool represents the overall district community well.

The group of all respondents likely skews older, as 74.1% have lived in the district for at least 10 years, while approximately 74.1% of the comparison group have lived in the district for at least 20 years.

It is also apparent that residents tend to stay once they move into the Lake of the Woods school community.

4 Please select all of the following that apply to you.*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
I have school-aged children	52.16%	0.00%
I have preschool-aged children (4+)	11.15%	0.00%
I have children who are younger than preschool age (0-3)	16.55%	0.00%
I have children who currently attend the Lake of the Woods school	50.00%	0.00%
I have children who graduated from or previously attended the Lake of the Woods school	42.09%	71.60%
I have grandchildren who currently attend or have attended the Lake of the Woods school	14.39%	32.10%
I have attended the Lake of the Woods school	38.13%	35.80%

Analysis:

With this statement, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100, as we divide by the total number of responses for this specific question instead of the total number of survey respondents. In all, 691 submissions were made to this statement.

The all-respondent pool is meaningfully diverse regarding participants and connections to the school district. Over 52% of all respondents have school-aged children, including 50.0% who currently have a child in a district school. Meanwhile, nearly two-fifths of all respondents (38.1%) have attended a Lake of the Woods school. Also, approximately 71.6% of the comparison group have a child who has attended a district school, while 35.8% attended a Lake of the Woods school.

I am a community member who has never had children attending the Lake of the Woods school	3.96%	11.11%
I am currently a student at the Lake of the Woods school	0.00%	0.00%
My children are home-schooled	0.72%	0.00%
My children attend a private or parochial school	0.00%	0.00%
My children open enroll out of the Lake of the Woods School District	1.08%	0.00%
I do not have children	3.60%	9.88%
I am currently employed by the Lake of the Woods School District	10.07%	0.00%
Other	4.68%	4.94%

Responses in the “Other” field included students who open enroll in the Lake of the Woods school district (3), former employees (3), their spouse graduated from a Lake of the Wood school (2), and land/property owner (2).

5 What level(s) do your child(ren) attend at Lake of the Woods School District? (Please select all that apply)*

Answer	All Responses
Preschool/Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (PK)	14.39%
Elementary School	70.50%
High School	51.08%

Analysis:

With this question, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100.

We understand that this distribution largely mirrors the student numbers. In all, 189 options were selected for the question.

6 Where do you receive information about the Lake of the Woods School District? (Please check all that apply.)*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
Parent organizations	9.71%	4.94%
Friends and neighbors	54.68%	53.09%
My children and their friends	40.29%	20.99%
District and/or school websites	62.59%	45.68%
Mailings from the School District	40.65%	33.33%
SchoolMessenger	30.22%	9.88%
School newsletters (email)	28.42%	8.64%
School Board meetings	33.09%	35.80%
Teachers and staff	45.68%	34.57%
Northern Light Region (print or online)	50.00%	72.84%
Bring Me The News (print or online)	1.08%	1.23%
Television	2.16%	2.47%
Radio	7.55%	3.70%
Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.)	57.55%	44.44%
Other	3.60%	2.47%

Analysis:

With this question, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100. In all, 1,299 options were selected for this question.

What stands out is how many ways respondents get information about the district. Normally, we see 3-4 options that receive 30% or more. In this case, there were nine with more than 30%. The top ways respondents receive information were district and/or school websites (62.6%), social media (57.6%), and friends and neighbors (54.7%).

Responses in Other included Facebook (2), School Board members (2), text messages (1), mobile apps the teachers use (1), and none (1).

Even the comparison group had eight options that received at least 20%, with the Northern Light Region being the clear choice (72.8%).

We would encourage the district to use this data to determine the best communication tools for reaching specific audiences.

7 Why do you visit the district's website? (Please check all that apply.)*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
ParentVue (check grades, student schedules, etc.)	36.69%	1.23%
Upcoming events/calendar	62.95%	50.62%
Access staff contact information	29.14%	7.41%
School news	35.61%	33.33%
Lunch menus	28.06%	4.94%
District policies, bylaws, and guidelines	15.47%	8.64%
School Board agendas/minutes	30.58%	33.33%
I don't visit the district website	18.35%	35.80%
Other	3.96%	1.23%

Analysis:

Once again, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100. In all, 725 options were selected for this question.

What stands out here is why all respondents visit the district website. Normally, 2-3 options receive 20% or more. In this case, there were six with more than 20%. The overwhelming top reasons for visiting the website were upcoming events/calendars (63.0%), with ParentVue (36.7%) and school news (35.6%) as the other top reasons.

Meanwhile, 35.8 of the comparison group do not visit the district website. This would suggest that information on the website would be best tailored to staff, students, and District families.

8 I am satisfied with the Lake of the Woods School District.*

Answer	All Responses	Comparison
Strongly agree	8.27%	4.94%
Agree	42.81%	33.33%
Disagree	24.10%	22.22%
Strongly Disagree	17.63%	27.16%
No opinion	7.19%	12.35%

Analysis:

More than 51% of all respondents and 38.3% of the comparison group are satisfied with the district.

Additional engagement efforts over the several months would be one way to raise the percentage of those who strongly agree or agree with this statement and positively impact any referendum efforts.

9 How would you describe the district to someone unfamiliar with it?

Themes

Approximately 175 responses were provided. Respondents used this open-ended question to leave various responses regarding the school district. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into several overall themes:

- Some respondents noted concerns regarding confidence in district leadership and the School Board. This was largely attributed to past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or a clear plan for future financial management.
- There were mixed opinions on the quality of education, with many praising elementary education while expressing concerns about high school education.
- Many comments shared supported the dedication and quality of teachers and support staff, mixed with concern about teacher turnover and burnout.
- The district's small size was viewed positively due to the close-knit community, small class sizes, and personalized attention. At the same time, some challenges were noted, including limited resources, fewer extracurricular opportunities, and difficulties in attracting and retaining quality staff.
- Some respondents called for improved communication and transparency from the district administration and the School Board, especially regarding the current financial situation.

10 How familiar are you with the Lake of the Woods School District's facility and operational needs?*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I am very familiar with the district's facility and operational needs.	31.29%	32.10%
I am somewhat familiar with the district's facility and operational needs.	60.07%	55.56%
I have no familiarity with the district's facility and operational needs.	8.63%	12.35%

Analysis:

More than 91% of all respondents and nearly 84% of the comparison group indicated they were well-informed or had some familiarity with the district's facility needs. This indicates the district has done a very good job of educating the community about its facility challenges. It also presents an opportunity as approximately 8.6% of all respondents and 12.4% of the comparison group have no familiarity with the process.

The district should continue to engage its community in the coming months. as more information will help residents with their decisions.

11 I would vote “yes” on a \$400,000 capital project levy question to address some of the most urgent needs as identified by the Lake of the Woods School District, having a preliminary tax impact of the amount referenced in the table above.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it.	28.42%	23.46%
I would probably support it	35.61%	24.69%
I would probably not support it.	16.55%	23.46%
I would definitely not support it.	19.42%	28.40%

Analysis:

Approximately 64% of all respondents and 48.2% of the comparison group strongly agree or agree that they would vote “yes” on a \$400,000 capital project levy question to address some of the most urgent needs identified by the Lake of the Woods School District.

12 Please share why you selected probably not or definitely not to the previous statement.*

	All Responses
The tax impact is too great.	28.00%
I don’t understand why funds are needed for these needs.	20.00%
Regardless of the dollar amount, I won’t support any levy or referendum.	29.00%
I don’t have enough information.	17.00%
Other	53.00%

Analysis:

The 100 individuals who responded they would probably not or definitely not support a \$400,000 capital project levy question were then asked why they selected that option on the previous statement. Once again, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100.

Of the four options presented, 29.0% indicated they would not support any levy or referendum regardless of dollar amount, 28.0% indicated the tax impact is too great, 20.0% don't understand why funds are needed, and 17.0% do not have enough information.

Fifty-three percent of respondents selected Other. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into several overall themes:

- Concerns regarding past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or concerns about the district's ability to handle money properly in the future.
- Concerns regarding confidence and trust in district leadership and the School Board
- Concerns that the proposed use of funds for technology does not align with current needs
- Calls for greater clarity and detail regarding how any money from a referendum would be spent
- Overall opposition to increasing taxes

13 I believe the district's building and facility maintenance needs must be addressed now.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
Strongly Agree	28.42%	25.93%
Agree	51.80%	40.74%
Disagree	14.75%	23.46%
Strongly Disagree	5.04%	9.88%

Analysis:

In most cases, the percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree with addressing urgent building and facility needs now tends to be higher than the support for specific solutions after a referendum date is announced or once dollar amounts and tax impacts are provided. This statement often sets the ceiling for support for specific solutions.

Notably, 80.2% of all respondents and 66.7% of the comparison group strongly agree or agree that the district's facility urgent facility needs must be addressed now.

This bodes well for the district if the right option and tax impact are determined. It should also be noted that some may have supported this statement but likely want the district to address the needs within its current budget.

14 Given the information above, how likely are you to support a building bond referendum on the November 2024 ballot?*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it	31.29%	29.63%
I would probably support it	36.69%	24.69%
I would probably not support it	18.35%	27.16%
I would definitely not support it	13.67%	18.52%

Analysis:

Approximately 70% of all respondents and 54.3% of the comparison group definitely or probably would support a building bond referendum question on the November 2024 ballot.

15 I would vote “yes” on a \$4 million building bond referendum question to address some of the most urgent building and facility needs, having a preliminary tax impact of the amount referenced in the table above.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it	30.94%	24.69%
I would probably support it	37.41%	29.63%
I would probably not support it	16.91%	24.69%
I would definitely not support it	14.75%	20.99%

Analysis:

Approximately 68.4% of all respondents and 54.3% of the comparison group would support a \$4 million building bond referendum question to address some of the most urgent building and facility needs.

16 I would vote “yes” on a \$5 million building bond referendum question to address the most urgent building and facility needs, including addressing the Athletic Field Complex needs. This would have a tax preliminary impact of the amount referenced in the table above.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it	29.86%	22.22%
I would probably support it	26.26%	14.81%
I would probably not support it	24.10%	30.86%
I would definitely not support it	19.78%	32.10%

Analysis:

Approximately 56.1% of all respondents and 37.0% of the comparison group would support a \$5 million building bond referendum question to address the most urgent building and facility needs, including addressing the Athletic Field Complex needs.

Support dropped 12.3% for the overall response group and 17.3% from the comparison group from the previous statement.

17 Please share why you selected probably not or definitely not to the previous statements.*

	All Responses
The tax impact is too great.	28.69%
I don't understand why funds are needed for these needs.	17.21%
Regardless of the dollar amount, I won't support any levy or referendum.	23.77%
I don't have enough information.	23.77%
Other	40.98%

Analysis and Themes

The 88 individuals who responded they would probably not or definitely not support a \$4 million building bond referendum and the 122 individuals who would probably not or definitely not support a \$5 million building bond referendum were then asked why they selected that option on the previous statement. Once again, respondents were asked to select all that apply. As such, the percentages will add up to over 100.

Of the four options presented, 28.7% indicated the tax impact is too great, 23.8% indicated they would not support any levy or referendum regardless of dollar amount, 23.8% do not have enough information, and 17.2% don't understand why funds are needed,

Nearly 41.0% of respondents selected Other. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into many of the same overall themes previously noted by survey respondents:

- Concerns regarding confidence and trust in district leadership and the School Board
- Concerns regarding past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or concerns about the district's ability to handle money properly in the future
- Calls for greater clarity and detail regarding how any money from a referendum would be spent
- Overall opposition to increasing taxes
- Calls for enhanced long-term planning and budgeting to avoid the current situation in the future
- Concerns that proposed spending priorities are not aligned with the needs of the school and students
- Looking for additional state funding, grants, and other non-tax revenue sources

18 I believe the district's operational needs must be addressed now.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
Strongly Agree	36.69%	27.16%
Agree	43.53%	39.51%
Disagree	12.95%	17.28%
Strongly Disagree	6.83%	16.05%

Analysis:

Approximately 80.2% of all respondents and 66.7% of the comparison group strongly agree or agree that the district's operational needs must be addressed now.

This bodes well for the district if the right option and tax impact are determined, although it should also be noted some may have supported this statement but likely want the district to address the needs within its current budget.

19 Given the information above, how likely are you to support an operating referendum on the November 2024 ballot?*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it	27.34%	22.22%
I would probably support it	34.89%	22.22%
I would probably not support it	21.94%	29.63%
I would definitely not support it	15.83%	25.93%

Analysis:

Approximately 62.2% of all respondents and 44.4% of the comparison group definitely or probably would support an operating referendum question on the November 2024 ballot.

20 I would vote “yes” on the November 2024 ballot to create a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil, having a preliminary tax impact of the amount referenced in the table above.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support it	26.62%	20.99%
I would probably support it	35.25%	25.93%
I would probably not support it	22.66%	27.16%
I would definitely not support it	15.47%	25.93%

Analysis:

Approximately 61.9% of all respondents and 46.9% of the comparison group strongly agree or agree that they would vote “yes” on a referendum question to create a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil.

21 Please share why you selected probably not or definitely not to the previous statements.*

	All Responses
The cost is too high.	19.81%
The tax impact is too great.	28.30%
Regardless of the dollar amount, I won't support any referendum.	28.30%
I don't have enough information.	20.75%
Other	43.40%

Analysis:

The 106 individuals who responded they would probably not or definitely not support creating a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil were then asked why they selected that option on the previous statement. Once again, respondents were asked to select all that apply.

Of the four options presented, 28.3% indicated they would not support any levy or referendum regardless of dollar amount, 28.3% indicated the tax impact is too great, 20.8% do not have enough information, and 19.8% said the cost is too high.

Approximately 43.4% of respondents selected Other. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into many of the same overall themes previously noted by survey respondents:

- Concerns regarding confidence and trust in district leadership and the School Board
- Concerns regarding past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or concerns about the district's ability to handle money properly in the future
- Calls for greater clarity and detail regarding how any money from a referendum would be spent
- Overall opposition to increasing taxes
- Calls for enhanced long-term planning and budgeting to avoid the current situation in the future
- Looking for additional state funding, grants, and other non-tax revenue sources
- Concerns about student retention

22

I would vote “yes” on a \$400,000 capital project levy question to address some of the most urgent needs as identified by the Lake of the Woods School District; a \$4 million or \$5 million building bond referendum question to address some of the most urgent building and facility needs; and creating a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil, having a preliminary tax impact in the amounts referenced in the prior tables.*

	All Responses	Comparison Group
I would definitely support all three	23.38%	18.52%
I would probably support all three	31.29%	20.99%
I would probably not support all three	25.18%	28.40%
I would definitely not support all three	20.14%	32.10%

Analysis:

Approximately 54.7% of all respondents and 39.5% of the comparison group strongly agree or agree that they would vote “yes” on a \$400,000 capital project levy question to address some of the most urgent needs as identified by the Lake of the Woods School District; a \$4 million or \$5 million building bond referendum question to address some of the most urgent building and facility needs; and creating a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil.

23 Please share your rationale, including if you would support any of the three questions.*

Common themes

The 126 individuals who responded that they would probably not or definitely not support a \$400,000 capital project levy question to address some of the most urgent needs as identified by the Lake of the Woods School District; a \$4 million or \$5 million building bond referendum question to address some of the most urgent building and facility needs; and creating a voter-approved operating referendum of \$497 per pupil, were then asked why they selected that option on the previous statement.

In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into many of the same overall themes previously noted by survey respondents:

- Concerns regarding confidence and trust in district leadership and the School Board
- Concerns regarding past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or a clear plan for future financial management
- Overall opposition to increasing taxes
- Concerns that the proposed use of funds does not align with the actual needs of the school and students
- Calls for additional efficiencies within the existing budget
- Calls for enhanced long-term planning and budgeting to avoid the current situation in the future

24 Please use the space below to provide additional information to the School Board as it considers solutions to address the district's facility needs.

Analysis:

Approximately 90 responses were provided. Respondents used this open-ended question to leave various responses and suggestions they would like the School Board to consider.

In examining the responses, we found that they fell into many of the same overall themes noted in previous sections of the survey:

- Concerns regarding confidence and trust in district leadership and the School Board
- Concerns regarding past fiscal mismanagement, how it was addressed, and/or a clear plan for future financial management
- Overall opposition to increasing taxes
- Concerns that the proposed use of funds does not align with the actual needs of the school and students
- Calls for additional efficiencies within the existing budget
- Calls for enhanced long-term planning and budgeting to avoid the current situation in the future
- Concerns about student and staff retention within the district
- Looking for additional state funding, grants, and other non-tax revenue sources