



Beloit Schools USD 273
Patron Telephone Survey 2024
Executive Summary
June 26, 2024

In June 2024, Beloit Schools USD 273 engaged ExcellenceK12 to conduct a brief telephone survey with 300 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voters living within the boundaries of the district.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers, and the completed interviews were divided into four geographic segments, with the number of completed interviews for each area based on the general population pattern, according to district leadership. The data collected has a Margin of Error of plus or minus 5.6%. (The Margin of Error within the demographic and subgroups is higher because of the smaller number of respondents.)

The results of the survey are as follows:

“Grading” the district’s performance

Overall, the survey findings showed the Beloit Schools is excelling in all areas and has strong support from its patrons.

Based on a 5-point weighted scale – where 5.00=A, 4.00=B, 3.00=C and 2.00=D and 1.00=F – all the factors – plus the district’s overall performance (**4.35**) – received a score of 3.91 or higher. An overall score of 5.00 is only possible if all 300 respondents answered each statement with an A.

The top-performing areas were:

- Preparation of students for college, vocational training, or employment – 4.60
- Quality of education – 4.43
- The value received for the tax dollars spent (the district has been financially responsible) – 4.13

These are near the top of the highest-rated factors we have seen on this type of survey, compared to similar school districts in Missouri.

Strengths and areas for improvement

The evaluation portion of the survey continued with two open-ended questions offering respondents the chance to share their thoughts on the district’s strengths and on areas where it could improve.

All 300 responses to each question were read and, where possible, coded, based on common words, phrases, and ideas to pinpoint the most frequently mentioned areas. Those that were outside of these “common” responses or that had more than one idea in the response are shown in verbatim form to the right of the related charts in the dashboard, with minor edits for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

In doing so, “Provides a good education” topped the list of strengths (114 mentions). This was followed by “Strong community support” (59 mentions) and “Teachers/staff” (49 mentions).

In terms of areas needing improvement, that list was led by “Don’t know” (90 mentions), followed by “They are doing fine” (65 mentions) and “Work with what they have/spend money wisely” (41 mentions).

Having “Don’t know” and “They are doing fine” as the top responses for 52% of the respondents on this question is good news because it means a notable percentage of the population has no specific concerns or issues.

Note: See the addendum and the dashboard for all the coded and verbatim responses.

Voter participation

The next sections of the survey dealt with why the April 2024 bond failed and suggested steps for how the district could improve the likelihood of the ballot measure passing in the future.

First, respondents were asked whether they voted in the bond election. The majority of the respondents (88%) said they voted. The respondents who said, “No” (12%) skipped ahead to the project questions.

Those who said they voted then were asked whether they voted, “Yes” (61%) or “No” (39%).

Reasons for voting, “No”

After determining how the respondents voted, the 102 respondents who said they voted, “No” were asked in an open-ended question to provide a reason for their opposition.

The responses were coded, based on common words, phrases, and ideas to pinpoint the most frequently mentioned areas. Those that were outside of these “common” responses or that had more than one idea in the response are shown in verbatim form below the chart, with minor edits for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The top reason participants provided for why they voted, “No” was “Too expensive/couldn’t afford” (51 mentions).

The next top responses were “Too much in it/not all was needed” (32 mentions) and “Wasn’t informed well enough” (13 mentions).

Reasons referendum failed

The 161 respondents who voted, “Yes” were asked in an open-ended question to provide reasons why they think the ballot measure failed.

These responses also were coded, based on common words, phrases, and ideas to pinpoint the most frequently mentioned areas. Those that were outside of these “common” responses or that had more than one idea in the response are shown in verbatim form below the chart, with minor edits for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The main reason given for the referendum’s failure (63 mentions) – was, again, related to money – “Cost was too prohibitive.”

The next top response was “They were asking to do too much” (43 mentions), followed by “Don’t know/Not sure” (26).

Ways to help the ballot measure pass

All 263 respondents who voted in the election were then asked in an open-ended question what the school district should do to help the ballot measure pass.

Again, the responses were coded for common words, phrases, and ideas. Those that were outside of these “common” responses or that had more than one idea in the response are shown in verbatim form below the chart, with minor edits for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The top suggestion for helping the ballot measure pass was a repeat of the previous sections – “Reduce the cost” (80 mentions).

The second-highest response also was a repeat of the previous sections – “Reduce/cut back the items in the referendum” (50 mentions). The third-highest response was not very helpful – “Don’t know” (39 mentions).

Support or opposition for the AG Center

As part of the district planning for its long-term needs, respondents first were asked their level of support for the district building a new \$4.4 million AG Center. The Center would include a new shop area, two new classrooms, and a multi-purpose classroom.

Less than half (46%) of the respondents said they would be “more likely to vote in favor of the bond issue.”

The amount of support stayed at 46% when the cost was lowered to \$3.4 million.

When the cost was lowered to \$2.4 million, support for the bond issue only grew by 2% to 48%. This means the difference in support between the highest and lowest cost is not statistically significant.

Next, respondents were asked whether they would support spending another \$1 million to remodel the AG Center into the Woods Construction area. Support was slightly higher at 51%. Those who responded, “No” or “Don’t know” were asked whether they would support spending \$1 million to add the Woods Construction area to the new AG Center, meaning both would be part of the new building. More than three-fourths of the respondents (76%) said, “No.”

Support or opposition for potential projects

The next set of questions presented the other six project ideas to address the district’s long-term needs. After each was described, respondents were asked if including this project in a future bond issue would make them “More likely to vote in favor,” “More likely to vote against” or would it “Make no difference” in their voting decision.

Four of the projects stood out, in terms of the level of support (descriptions truncated):

- Complete Phase 4 of the HVAC projects – 87% “More likely to vote in favor”
- Build a new press box at Trojan Stadium – 60%
- Build new restrooms on the west end of the home side of Trojan Stadium – 58%
- Resurface two tennis courts – 55%

The support was much less for the remaining two projects. In fact, one project had more respondents against than in favor of it:

- Renovate the locker rooms at Beloit Junior-Senior High School – 37%
- Resurface the track at Trojan Stadium – 34% (52% against)

Having the opponents outnumber the supporters for the last project and the low support for the other one – considering the stronger support for others – indicates a high number of respondents have some concerns about these particular projects.

Support or opposition for a bond issue (in town)

After hearing all the project ideas, respondents first were asked whether they lived “in town” or “on Ag land.” The 214 respondents who said, “in town” were provided four different tax level increase options and asked to provide their level of support.

Less than half (48%) of the respondents said they would “Strongly support” or “Support” a \$250 per year tax increase. Keeping the Margin of Error of plus or minus 5.6% in mind, support at the top tax level ranged from 42% to 54%.

When opponents and those who were undecided were asked about their support for a \$200 per year tax increase, total support stayed at 48%.

Those who did not support or were undecided about the previous tax increase amount were then asked if they would support a \$150 per year tax increase. Support increased slightly to 51%, which is not statistically significant.

Continuing opponents and undecided respondents were then asked if they would support a \$100 per year tax increase. Support increased by 1% to 52%.

Keeping the Margin of Error of plus or minus 5.6% in mind, support at the lowest tax level ranged from 46% to 58%.

Support or opposition for a bond issue (on ag land)

The 86 respondents who said they lived “on Ag land” were asked a different set of questions. They were provided three different dollar amount increases to their land and asked to provide their level of support.

No respondents said they would “Strongly support” any of the three dollar amounts.

Less than half (43%) said they would “Support” a \$181 increase to their land. Keeping the Margin of Error of plus or minus 5.6% in mind, support at the top increase level ranged from 37% to 49%.

When opponents and those who were undecided were asked about their support for a \$120 increase, total support grew slightly to 47%.

Continuing opponents and undecided respondents were then asked if they would support a \$60 increase. The support increased significantly by 16% to 63%.

Keeping the Margin of Error of plus or minus 5.6% in mind, support at the lowest increase ranged from 57% to 69%.

Communication from the district

To determine the best way to communicate with district patrons, the last question of the survey asked respondents how they receive news about the district.

For this open-ended question, all the responses were reviewed and, where possible, coded, based on common words, phrases, and ideas to pinpoint the most frequently mentioned areas. Those that were outside of these “common” responses or had more than one idea in the response are shown in verbatim form below the related chart in the dashboard, with minor edits for punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

Respondents said their top source for district news, other than friends and neighbors, was “Children/grandchildren in school” (21%). The second-top response was “Social media” (19%).

The other top sources were:

- Website (17%)
- Information sent from district (14%)
- Teachers (9%)

Note: See the addendum and the dashboard for all the coded and verbatim responses.

Final analysis

First and foremost, the survey findings show a district that is performing well and receiving very high marks from its patrons. As mentioned, these are some of the highest grades we have seen. The district brand is strong.

When asked questions related to the bond issue, a central theme, which was echoed in the online survey and focus groups, was the size of the bond proposal. Most patrons were a bit overwhelmed by the number of projects presented and the projected costs for specific projects – such as \$4.4 million for the new AG Center, another \$1 million to move the Woods Construction area to the AG Center, and \$865,000 for a new press box. All of these were thought to be too expensive.

Additionally, patrons found the overall cost of the bond issue to be much too high. However, they indicated a much smaller “ask” could be more acceptable.

The HVAC replacement garnered solid support in all surveys, with the caveat that people felt the issue should have been dealt with years ago. Also, patrons seemed like they would be more supportive of the new AG Center at a much more modest price point.

All in all, the district should be very pleased with these survey results. While there is work to be done in garnering support for some issues, the overall tone of the survey responses indicates a more modest proposal would have stronger support.

Note: All data from the survey are available in the district’s dashboard. Additionally, the responses to the open-ended questions related to areas of strength and areas for improvement, as well as district news sources, are shown in the addendum and the dashboard.