



Donovan Group
School Communications

Chisholm Public School District

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT
July 2022
DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chisholm Public School District has been engaged in a process to explore options for addressing its facility needs, along with continuing an operational referendum.

The district selected a consulting firm in December 2020 to examine the district's needs, including a review of current facilities. Teachers, administrators, staff, and students were asked for their input throughout the spring of 2021. The district has hosted three community engagement sessions over the past few months as the School Board decides next steps.

The District hired InGensa, Inc. to lead them through a Strategic Planning Process focused on academics and financial planning because Chisholm Public Schools' operating levy was expiring. Facilities planning evolved from the goals outlined in the strategic planning process.

To continue this community engagement effort, the Board of Education and district administration requested that a survey be conducted. The survey was administered by the Donovan Group. Input from community members will be used to evaluate solutions that meet the community's needs, are financially responsible, and move the district and community forward.

Should the district decide to place a referendum question on the November 2022 ballot, the information from the survey will help determine how to address the district's facilities needs. Survey data will also be used if an operational referendum question should be included.

It is worth noting that, for most of the survey questions, there was a high level of clarity and consistency in terms of the preferences expressed by survey respondents. To that end, it is unlikely that more responses would have significantly changed the survey's results.

This report provides a summary of survey responses, along with 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. In accordance with best practices in online research and to protect the security of the survey, internet protocol (IP) addresses were logged and each response was time stamped.

While we do not detail our survey security protocols, if we have reason to believe that anyone has taken the survey more than once or that there is any fraud, those responses are removed.

To encourage residents to take the survey, the school district mailed the survey to all households. Paper copies were also made available at some district buildings. The district also used its multiple communication tools to remind stakeholders to complete the survey while it was open. The survey was open from June 27 to July 11, 2022.

Finally, it is worth noting that, by design, this data is not based on a scientific sample. Therefore, it should be treated as qualitative data that is similar to data from a large number of focus groups. Because we used a convenience sample, it would be methodologically inappropriate to carry out a regression analysis or attempt to calculate error. Our response pool to date is a solid one that provides sound data to the board.

SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 250 community members completed the survey. To complete the survey, respondents must have clicked "submit" at the end of the online survey and answered all of the required questions, or answered all of the required questions on the paper copy.

Below are the questions and their corresponding responses. The first set of data (in black) reflects the responses of all completed surveys. The second set of data (in blue) 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.

The third set of data, starting with Question No. 9 (in red), provides a weighted average of those who are affiliated with the district and the comparison group. In most districts, about 70 percent of eligible voters do not have an affiliation with the district, which is why that group was given a .70 weight. Those who are affiliated with the district received a .30 weight.

We typically find the comparison group to be a more accurate representation of the general population than all respondents. There were 156 completed results in the comparison group, representing a little more than 62 percent of the total respondents. That is 20-30 percent higher than we usually see. 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 each question and result is a brief analysis from the Donovan Group team.

1) What is your age?*

18 or under	3.00%	3.21%
19–25	1.60%	2.56%
26–34	4.80%	1.92%
35–44	30.00%	15.38%
45–54	22.00%	17.31%
55–64	19.20%	26.92%
65 or over	20.40%	32.69%

Analysis: Generally, we find that those who are 65 and older tend to be underrepresented in school district surveys. We are pleased that the all-respondent group included more than 20 percent of those residents, and that the comparison group was more than 32 percent. It is also typical for the comparison group to skew older than the larger group of respondents, which is the case here; more than 59 percent of the comparison group was 55 or older. Overall, the survey received a healthy balance of respondents across age groups 35 and older, although we would have liked to see more participation from those ages 34 and younger.

2) Where do you reside?*

City of Chisholm	76.40%	76.92%
Township of Balkan	16.00%	16.03%
Other	7.60%	7.05%

Analysis: It is our understanding that this distribution largely mirrors the population of the district and therefore represents a good respondent pool. Note that the comparison groups for each municipality were within one percentage point of the overall respondents.

3) How long have you lived in the Chisholm Public School District?*

Fewer than 2 years	1.60%	1.28%
Between 2 and 5 years	4.40%	3.85%
Between 5 and 10 years	9.20%	5.13%
Between 10 and 20 years	16.80%	14.74%
Between 20 and 30 years	14.40%	14.74%
More than 30 years	48.00%	55.13%
I do not live in the District	5.60%	5.13%

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 fewer than 10 years, this pool provides us with a solid representation of the overall district community. It is also apparent that once residents move into the Chisholm school community, they tend to stay for a long time.

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

I have children younger than 4-year-old kindergarten	5.60%	0.00%
I have children in 4-year-old kindergarten	2.80%	0.00%
I have children who currently attend Chisholm Public Schools (K-12)	30.40%	0.00%
I have children who graduated from or previously attended a Chisholm Public School (K-12)	33.60%	42.31%
I have grandchildren who currently attend or have attended a Chisholm Public School (K-12)	11.60%	17.95%
I had children or grandchildren who previously attended Chisholm schools but no one currently	11.20%	15.38%
I have children who currently attend or have attended a private school	3.20%	1.92%
I have grandchildren who currently attend or have attended a private school	1.20%	1.92%
I attended a Chisholm Public School	38.40%	45.51%
I have a community member who has never had children in Chisholm Public Schools	10.80%	16.03%
I have children who are currently home-schooled	2.80%	1.92%
I am a Chisholm Public Schools employee	8.40%	0.00%
I do not have children	12.40%	19.23%
None of the above	2.00%	3.21%
Other	4.80%	5.13%

Analysis: No surprises here. The respondent pool is meaningfully diverse in terms of participants and connections to the school district. Note that more than 42 percent of the comparison group have a child who graduated from or previously attended a district school, while more than 45 percent also attended Chisholm public schools. In addition, it is interesting to note that more than 38 percent of all respondents attended Chisholm public schools.

5) If your children) currently attend(s) a Chisholm Public School, which school(s) do they attend? (Please select all that apply)

Vaughan-Steffensrud School (grades pre-K to 3rd)	30.26%
Chisholm Elementary School (grades 4-6)	39.47%
Chisholm High School (grades 7-12)	69.74%

Analysis: This was a logic question, as only those who indicated on Question 4 that they had children in Chisholm Public Schools could answer it. It is our understanding that the respondent pool roughly reflects the district's current enrollment numbers. The survey received a good response rate from individuals who do have school-aged children.

6) Do you visit the District's website?*

Yes	60.16%	44.74%
No	39.84%	55.26%

Analysis: It is not surprising that the all-respondent group visits the website more than the comparison group. Having a 15-point gap is pretty typical for most school districts. However, the gap also makes it clear that the district should use different communications tools to reach those not as closely connected to Chisholm Public Schools as their families.

7) If you answered yes to the previous question, why do you visit the District website? (Please select all that apply)*

PowerSchool parent access	45.95%	11.76%
Search for upcoming events	69.59%	61.76%
Access staff contact information	33.11%	17.65%
View lunch menus	25.00%	7.35%
View sports/co-curricular calendars	55.41%	50.00%
Seek employment opportunities	6.08%	4.41%
View District policies, bylaws and guidelines	23.65%	19.12%
Review School Board agendas/minutes	43.24%	44.12%
Other	4.05%	7.35%

Analysis: The No. 1 response among all respondents and the comparison group about why they visit the district website was to search for upcoming events, while viewing sports/co-curricular calendars was a clear second choice. It is interesting to note that the percentage of all respondents and the comparison group who go to the District website to review School Board agendas and minutes is 10-20 percent higher than we see in most districts.

8) Where do you get your information about Chisholm Public Schools? (Please select all that apply)*

Parent organizations	6.40%	3.21%
Friends and/or neighbors	48.40%	50.00%
My children and their friends	26.80%	12.18%
District or school websites	43.60%	30.13%

District mailings	34.40%	25.00%
School newsletters (email)	11.20%	1.92%
District newsletters (email)	5.20%	0.64%
School Board meetings	17.60%	12.18%
Teachers and staff	34.00%	21.79%
<i>Mesabi Tribune</i>	35.20%	49.36%
Local television	12.00%	16.03%
Local radio	6.80%	8.79%
Facebook	54.80%	49.36%
Instagram	6.40%	5.77%
Twitter	0.80%	0.64%
Other	4.00%	3.85%

Analysis: *There were three options—friends and/or neighbors, Facebook, and District or school websites—that received more than 40 percent from all respondents. The only options to receive more than 40 percent from the comparison group were friends and/or neighbors, Facebook, and the Mesabi Tribune. We would encourage the district to use this data to determine the best communication tools for reaching specific audiences going forward.*

9) I am satisfied with Chisholm Public Schools.*

Strongly agree	11.60%	7.69%	9.85%
Agree	52.80%	48.08%	51.55%
Disagree	18.80%	23.08%	21.19%
Strongly disagree	5.60%	5.77%	4.16%
No opinion	11.20%	15.38%	12.26%

Analysis: *More than 64 percent of all respondents and 55 percent of the comparison group are satisfied with the district. These numbers are 5-10 percentage points lower than we are seeing with other Midwestern districts we work with over the past couple years. However, it is important to note that 11-15 percent, depending on the group, had no opinion. Additional engagement efforts over the next year would be one raise to raise the percentage of those who strongly agree or agree with this statement.*

10) On a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to recommend Chisholm Public Schools to a friend, colleague or family member? (A score of 0 means you would not recommend the district, a score of 10 indicates you would be extremely likely to recommend the district.)*

0	5.13%	5.26%
1	3.08%	3.28%
2	4.62%	3.28%
3	4.10%	4.61%
4	5.64%	5.26%
5	16.41%	14.47%
6	16.92%	17.76%
7	15.38%	13.16%
8	26.67%	15.79%
9	13.33%	5.92%
10	16.92%	11.18%

Analysis: Scores of 7 or higher on this question indicate survey participants would be likely to recommend the district, while scores of 4 or lower are cause for concern. The district had more than 72 percent of all respondents offer a score of 7 or higher, which is a strong result. Meanwhile, about 22 percent of all respondents and the comparison group gave a score of 4 or lower, indicating that the district has a solid reputation among those who do not have direct connections to its schools.

11) How would you describe the District to someone not familiar with it?

Summary: Including those who took the survey, but did not complete it, approximately 270 responses were provided. Respondents used this open-ended question to leave a wide variety of responses regarding the school district as it attempts to address facility needs. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into several overall categories:

- Small class sizes, although limited course options was mentioned extensively.
- A small, but vocal, minority believe academics have suffered in recent years.
- Lots of support for teaching staff.
- Concerns about bullying, lack of discipline, and declining academic performance.

Below is a sampling of each of these common themes. (Responses have not been edited.)

- Currently a district in transition for the better. Good education and class sizes.
- Lack of insights into inclusion of all kids. Small size so most kids are known to someone. Long history of some stellar teachers. Lack of understanding of the need to prepare our kids for a world beyond Chisholm. Too much politics in district.
- Hard working, dedicated and friendly staff/teachers. The district works with the Chamber, Kids Plus, local businesses and public facilities to enhance the students education.
- Big enough to offer a variety of classes-small enough to feel like a community.
- Close minded, inadequate resources, burnt out teachers, bullying, lack of professionalism.
- Good teachers but somewhat limited on class options.

12) How familiar are you with the school district’s facility challenges and the process the School Board is using to find solutions?*

I am very familiar with the facility challenges and process	29.20%	25.00%	25.89%
I am somewhat familiar with the facility challenges and process	54.40%	56.41%	56.26%
I have no familiarity with the facility challenges and process	16.40%	18.59%	17.86%

Analysis: More than 83 percent of all respondents and more than 81 percent of the comparison group indicated they were well informed or had some familiarity with the facility challenges and process the School Board is using to find solutions. But with 16.40 to 18.59 percent, depending on the group, having no familiarity with the process, there appears to be ample opportunity for the district to continue to engage stakeholders in the coming months.

13) I believe the district’s facility needs must be addressed now.*

Strongly agree	39.60%	27.56%	32.15%
Agree	38.80%	45.51%	43.97%
Disagree	15.60%	19.23%	17.37%
Strongly disagree	6.00%	7.69%	6.50%

Analysis: In most cases, the percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree to this statement tends to be higher than the support for specific solutions. This statement often sets the ceiling for support for specific solutions. As we often witness, the all-respondent group, which is parent-heavy, is almost always more likely to agree or strongly agree that needs must be addressed now. However, to have more than 78 percent support from all respondents, more than 76 percent support from the weighted group, and more than 73 percent support from the comparison group is very encouraging.

14) Given the information above, how likely are you to support a (capital) bond referendum on the November 2022 ballot?*

I would definitely support it	35.60%	27.56%	31.22%
I would probably support it	29.60%	30.13%	30.97%
I would probably not support it	18.40%	21.15%	19.47%
I would definitely not support it	16.40%	21.15%	18.35%

Analysis: We often see a drop of 5-10 percentage points when a date is added and this question is asked. However, more than 65 percent of all respondents and more than 57 percent of the comparison group would definitely or probably support a capital (bond) referendum question in November. This bodes well for the district if the right facilities option and tax impact are determined.

15) I would vote “yes” on a \$32 million capital (bond) referendum question paid over 20 years and having a tax impact as indicated in the table above.*

I would definitely support it	27.20%	19.87%	22.67%
I would probably support it	25.60%	25.00%	26.26%
I would probably not support it	10.40%	13.46%	11.84%
I would definitely not support it	20.80%	24.36%	21.71%
I'm not sure I would support it	16.00%	17.31%	17.52%

Analysis: Nearly 53 percent of all respondents would support a \$32 million capital (bond) referendum. That number dropped to almost 45 percent of the comparison group. It is important to note that at least 16 percent of survey participants were not sure if they would support this option. What we can safely predict about that group is that some will end up supporting and others won't. Typically we see an increase of 3-5 percent support when that option is offered.

16) I would vote “yes” on a capital (bond) referendum question paid over 20 years but only if the district is able to obtain additional funds from the state legislature, the IRRRB, COVID relief funds, or the Minnesota Head Start Association, thereby reducing the tax impact of \$305.95 by 25 percent or more on \$100,000 of assessed residential property value.*

I would definitely support it	34.80%	24.36%	28.05%
I would probably support it	25.20%	28.85%	28.77%
I would probably not support it	8.80%	10.90%	9.68%
I would definitely not support it	13.60%	16.03%	14.57%
I'm not sure I would support it	17.60%	19.87%	18.94%

Analysis: Sixty percent of all respondents and more than 53 percent of the comparison group would support a capital (bond) referendum that reduces the tax impact by 25 percent or more on \$100,000 of assessed residential property value. It is important to note that at least 17.6 percent of survey participants

were not sure if they would support this option, which again provides an opportunity to have more support in November.

17) Please use the space below to provide additional information you feel the board should keep in mind as it considers a capital (bond) referendum.

Summary: *Approximately 80 responses were provided. Respondents used this open-ended question to leave a wide variety of comments regarding the school district as it looks to address facility needs. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into several overall categories:*

- *Some respondents want to know what it would cost taxpayers to consolidate. In all, five of the responses to this statement focused on consolidation.*
- *Some suggested a single school or not closing any schools.*
- *Concerns about tax impact and if residents can afford it during current economic uncertainty.*
- *Need to help residents better understand why upgrades are needed.*
- *Misunderstanding that all taxpayers should pay the same amount rather than based on residential property value.*

Below is a sampling of each of these common themes. (Responses have not been edited.)

- *Many of the addressed needs are optional to children getting a good education. Such as a pool reconstruction. I can not afford to pay any additional taxes. Is it ever going to be good enough??? I may consider a flat fee for all tax payers in Chisholm, not basing the amount you pay on your property value!!*
- *We need to support this to keep Chisholm in first place as far as education and sporting events, I truly love Chisholm and the Chisholm School district.*
- *I support one campus and paying for it. I would like to see less space wasted in parking and more room for elementary kids, outdoor space, etc.*
- *Talk about program and curriculum benefits.*
- *Consolidate with Hibbing. It's inevitable!*

18) I would vote “yes” to renew the current operating levy, with no changes to taxes.*

I would definitely support it	41.20%	34.62%	37.46%
I would probably support it	28.00%	31.41%	30.38%
I would probably not support it	5.20%	6.41%	5.80%
I would definitely not support it	7.60%	8.97%	7.59%
I'm not sure I would support it	18.00%	18.59%	18.79%

Analysis: *More than 69 percent of all respondents and more than 66 percent of the comparison group would support renewing the current operating levy, with no changes to taxes. This statement also had the highest percentage of “unsure” responses. This means there is ample opportunity for the district to engage and inform residents over the coming months.*

18) Please use the space below to provide additional information for the school board to consider.

Summary: *Approximately 40 responses were provided. Respondents used this open-ended question to leave a wide variety of comments regarding the school district as it looks to address facility needs and renew the operating levy. In examining the responses, we found that they tended to fall into several overall categories:*

- *Those on fixed incomes worried they can't afford additional increases in property taxes.*
- *Those who support consolidation with Hibbing want to know the financial impact. In all, seven responses to this statement prefer consolidation.*
- *Questions about why with a drop in enrollment the tax levy continues to go up.*
- *Concerns that now may not be the right time to address concerns due to uncertainty over inflation, war in Europe, etc.*

Below is a sampling of each of these common themes. (Responses have not been edited.)

- When trying to keep operating expenses down, I wholeheartedly believe teachers should always get fair raises! They should not be expected to accept 0% or similar minuscule percents. Too often I hear of teaching staffs having to settle for such tiny raises that their net pay ends up being a loss. That is sad and unacceptable! They are the backbone of the school!
- I would like to know what will become of Vaughan Steffensrud school. I would hate to see it go.
- There has to be a way for everything to work out where people who are on fixed incomes do not have to have the price of their taxes go up. There are many older people living in Chisholm on fixed incomes that cannot afford for their taxes to go up so drastically!!
- I really don't see the value in keeping this school district open. There are limited opportunities for students, yet home owners still have to pay a nice chunk of taxes - and you are asking to raise taxes? No thank you. Consolidating with Hibbing would be better. Most opportunities are through them anyway.