

De Soto USD 232 2008 Patron Survey

Final Report

February 25, 2008

Findings

Finding 1: Patrons expressed a high degree of appreciation for the district’s “educational product” and those who deliver it, but they were somewhat less enthusiastic about areas that could be summarized as having to do with the district/patron relationship.

To qualify to participate in the survey, a respondent had to be the male or female head of the household, a registered voter and aware that he or she lived within the boundaries of the De Soto USD 232 School District.

After clearing those hurdles, each respondent was asked to identify where he or she lived using the quadrants of K-7 Highway and Shawnee Mission Parkway. In an effort to mirror the general population density, a quota was established by the district in which 80 surveys were completed with those who lived west of K-7. Those who lived east were divided as follows: 260 north of Shawnee Mission Parkway, and 60 south.

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 19 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 De Soto School District, survey participants gave the district a grade of 4.00 on 11 areas, plus on the overall grade. Specifically:

- Convenience of school locations – 4.73
- Quality of school facilities – 4.46
- Quality of teachers – 4.38
- The district’s efforts to provide suitable access to quality technology to all students – 4.32
- Responsiveness and courtesy of school building personnel – 4.31
- Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities – 4.30
- Quality of school building administration – 4.28
- Overall grade – 4.14
- Performance of the Superintendent – 4.09
- Number of students in each classroom – 4.05
- Size of school buildings in the De Soto School District – 4.04
- Preparation of students for college, vocational training, or the world of work – 4.03

These are quite impressive marks and suggest that district patrons are highly satisfied with what takes place in the classroom, and they appreciate the work of those who are responsible for delivering this “educational product.”

For the most part, the group of items that patrons scored below 4.00 – but above the midpoint between a “C” and a “B” – could best be described as issues related to the district/patron relationship. Specifically:

- Performance of the De Soto School Board – 3.81
- District’s efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons – 3.72
- Value for the tax dollars spent on operating expenses – 3.59
- Balance of spending between academics, athletics and the arts – 3.57
- District’s record on making and fulfilling promises – 3.56
- Value for the tax dollars spent on building projects – 3.53
- District’s responsiveness to patron concerns – 3.51

Individually, these grades (plus the last one on the list – “District’s efforts to involve citizens in decision-making” – which scored a 3.32) would not be terribly troubling. A careful study reveals that most of these lower grades were the result of more patrons saying “C” (the equivalent, for many, of “I don’t know, so I’ll give it an average grade”) rather than a “D” or “F,” which would suggest a significant problem.

However, taken together the data seems to suggest the presence of a measurable level of concern among district patrons about how the district functions, how it spends money, and how it keeps citizens involved in the process.

What makes these results rather challenging, is that there is no one area that, if addressed with vigor, would solve this general wish for more from patrons. Rather, it is a systemic issue that will require steady attention from all those concerned to move the needle.

Questions 1 through 3 asked patrons to identify whether or not they were a head of household, a registered voter and aware that they lived within the boundaries of the De Soto USD 232 School District. A “yes” answer on all three questions was required to continue. As such, these questions are not displayed below. Questions 4 and 5 pinpointed the location of the respondent’s residence relative to K-7 and Shawnee Mission Parkway. Those quotas were stated above and, as such, those questions and answers are also not displayed below.

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 De Soto School District from others, please tell me what grade you would give the De Soto School District on each of the following items. Let’s start with... *Questions 6 through 30 were rotated to eliminate order bias, but those with possible follow-up questions were kept together so that they made sense to the respondents. “Don’t know” was not read to respondents. Percentages on all questions may add to more or less than 100%, due to rounding.*

6. Convenience of school locations

Response	Percentage
A	74%
B	25%
C	1%
D	0%
F	<1%
Don’t know (not read)	0%

7. Quality of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	56%
B	32%
C	5%
D	3%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	4%

8. Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities

Response	Percentage
A	42%
B	38%
C	11%
D	2%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	7%

9. Number of students in each classroom

Response	Percentage
A	24%
B	43%
C	15%
D	3%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	16%

10. Why did you give the number of students in each classroom this grade?

Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 69 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 9. All 69 respondents said, in essence, "the classrooms are too small" or "the classrooms are too crowded," with no additional nuances.

11. Size of school buildings in the De Soto School District

Response	Percentage
A	28%
B	37%
C	21%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	12%

12. Why did you give the size of school buildings in the De Soto School District this grade? Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 91 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 11. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.

Response	Number
The buildings are unable to handle the number of students/schools are too small	80
District is growing	7
Other (see below)	4

Verbatim "other" comments

They need to reconfigure students and bus them to schools where there is space for them.

They could have used old buildings and expanded them or remodeled rather than spending money just to compete with other districts. We do not need to compete with the bigger districts.

They are a little too big.

Some are too small and some are too big.

13. Responsiveness and courtesy of school building personnel

Response	Percentage
A	40%
B	31%
C	6%
D	4%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	19%

14. Why did you give the responsiveness and courtesy of school building personnel this grade? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 42 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 13. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
School personnel don't respond to problems/issues	23
Teachers take too long to return calls	9
Staff at schools are rude	8
Other (see below)	2

Verbatim "other" comments

I complained and was not listened to. My grandchildren cannot attend the school closest to us.

They don't have enough teachers on the playground to watch the students.

15. Quality of teachers

Response	Percentage
A	41%
B	43%
C	7%
D	0%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	9%

16. Quality of school building administration

Response	Percentage
A	32%
B	47%
C	7%
D	1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	14%

17. Performance of the superintendent

Response	Percentage
A	25%
B	32%
C	9%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	30%

18. Why did you give the performance of the superintendent this grade? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 53 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 17. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Doesn't listen to patrons	33
Poor planning	12
Unrealistic goals	5
Other (see below)	3

Verbatim "other" comments

She does what she wants to do.

She thinks too big. We are not Shawnee Mission, and we are not Olathe.

The Superintendent does not think of the welfare of students.

19. Performance of the De Soto School Board

Response	Percentage
A	17%
B	29%
C	16%
D	5%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	32%

20. Why did you give the performance of the De Soto School Board this grade?

Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 89 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 19. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.

Response	Number
Poor planning/bad decisions	26
Money not spent wisely	21
Not looking out for students' best needs	17
Too much dissention/can't agree	14
Other (see below)	11

Verbatim "other" comments

A few board members are only interested in the western Shawnee area and not the downtown De Soto area.

A couple of board members seem to cause a lot of problems that are not necessarily good for the district.

They need to do a better job of addressing some issues.

The new administration building cost \$3 million. They also give projects to friends.

Two members are not looking out for the welfare of the district and are running "vote no" campaigns.

Old blood needs to be replaced.

It seems that at least 2 members of the board create too many issues and make things more confusing than they have to.

We have too many schools.

They can't seem to solve the crowding problems.

They cannot seem to make good choices on boundaries and allocating money.

An elementary school was sold. It could have been used for early childhood.

21. The district's efforts to provide suitable access to quality technology to all students

Response	Percentage
A	31%
B	36%
C	7%
D	<1%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	27%

22. Value for the tax dollars spent by the De Soto School District on building projects

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	41%
C	28%
D	6%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	16%

23. Value for the tax dollars spent by the De Soto School District on operating expenses

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	35%
C	27%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	24%

24. Balance of spending between academics, athletics and the arts

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	42%
C	25%
D	5%
F	2%
Don't know (not read)	19%

25. Why did you give the balance of spending between academics, athletics and the arts this grade? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 130 respondents who answered "C," "D," or "F" on question 24. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Too much emphasis on sports	79
Academics need to be a higher priority	40
The arts suffer	9
Other (see below)	2

Verbatim "other" comments

Too much emphasis is on earning college athletic scholarships. Kids do not know how to count back change in the store.

There is not enough emphasis on sports and too much emphasis on the arts.

26. The district's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons

Response	Percentage
A	16%
B	39%
C	31%
D	5%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	9%

27. The district's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making

Response	Percentage
A	7%
B	34%
C	36%
D	12%
F	3%
Don't know (not read)	8%

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

Response	Percentage
A	8%
B	36%
C	31%
D	4%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	20%

29. The district's responsiveness to patron concerns

Response	Percentage
A	11%
B	29%
C	40%
D	7%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	13%

30. Preparation of students for college, vocational training or the world of work

Response	Percentage
A	21%
B	47%
C	13%
D	1%
F	1%
Don't know (not read)	16%

31. Overall, what grade would you give the De Soto School District?

Response	Percentage
A	26%
B	61%
C	9%
D	2%
F	0%
Don't know (not read)	3%

Cross-tabulation: 5-point scale rating on graded factors

Factor	5-point scale rating
Convenience of school locations	4.73
Quality of school facilities	4.46
Quality of teachers	4.38
The district's efforts to provide suitable access to quality technology to all students	4.32*
Responsiveness and courtesy of school building personnel	4.31
Upkeep and maintenance of school facilities	4.30
Quality of school building administration	4.28
Overall grade	4.14
Performance of the Superintendent	4.09*
Number of students in each classroom	4.05
Size of school buildings in the De Soto School District	4.04
Preparation of students for college, vocational training or the world of work	4.03
Performance of the De Soto School Board	3.81*
District's efforts to report its plans and progress to patrons	3.72
Value for the tax dollars spent on operating expenses	3.59*
Balance of spending between academics, athletics and the arts	3.57
District's record on making and fulfilling promises	3.56*
Value for the tax dollars spent on building projects	3.53
District's responsiveness to patron concerns	3.51
District's efforts to involve citizens in decision-making	3.32

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

Finding 2: Patrons seem to be divided over whether the district should focus on short-term solutions that cost less, or long-term solutions with a higher price tag. However, among those with an opinion on the subject, the idea of considering capital outlay funds for smaller projects was judged to have appeal.

The first set of transition questions between the grading section and the actual project questions dealt with two key philosophical areas.

First, patrons were asked – in a very matter-of-fact manner – whether they believed the district should address only the most immediate challenges to keep the costs low, or look for long-term solutions that would be more costly today. Survey respondents leaned modestly toward short-term/lower-cost solutions (49%), instead of long-term/higher-cost alternatives (40%). The remaining 11% of survey respondents said “don’t know.”

Their thoughts were a bit more definitive when the idea of using capital outlay funds for smaller projects was presented for their consideration. More than half of the survey participants (51%) said that the district should consider this strategy, while 14% said the district should not, and 36% said “don’t know.”

To evaluate the impact of certain key demographic and geographic characteristics on the answers provided by respondents, a cross-tabulation analysis was completed on this (and other) key questions. The categories analyzed were age, length of time living in the district, presence of current or past district students in the household (or no district student ever in the household), educational level of the respondent, and where the respondent lived.

The differences of opinion were more pronounced on questions later in the survey than on these topics. However, it is interesting to note that each subgroup – except those who had lived in the district up to 15 years – preferred short-term solutions over long-term ones. (Those with only a high school diploma felt the same about each option.)

Additionally, support for using capital outlay funds ranged from 60% (those with a current district student in the household), down to 42% (those with only a high school diploma). It is, however, important to remember that “don’t know” – rather than “no, don’t use capital outlay funds” – was the second most frequent answer on this question.

32. Generally speaking, would you prefer that the district look for short-term, lower-cost solutions to address the most immediate challenges associated with a growing student population, or would you rather that the district offer longer-term solutions that may cost more now, but that would address current and future challenges? Primary choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
Short-term/lower cost	49%
Long-term/higher cost	40%
Don’t know (not read)	11%

33. Each school district has what is known as a capital outlay budget. Some school districts use their capital outlay budget for smaller projects, such as classroom additions to an elementary school. This may result in a larger tax increase, but for a shorter period of time – such as 3 or 4 years, instead of 15 or 20. Knowing this, do you think that the De Soto School District should consider using its capital outlay budget for such smaller projects? Primary choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
Yes	51%
No	14%
Don’t know (not read)	36%

Cross-tabulation: Short-term/long-term opinions, and “yes” on capital outlay by region, by length of time living in the district, and by educational status. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that educational status will not square with “overall,” because 4 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	W/K-7 (n=80)	E/K-7, N/SMP (n=260)	E/K-7, S/SMP (n=60)	Up to 5 years (n=65)	5 to 15 years (n=142)	More than 15 years (n=193)	HS Grad or less (n=86)	Voc/2- year degree (n=107)	Bachelor’s Degree (n=159)	More than Bachelor’s Degree (n=44)
Short-term/lower cost	49%	58%	47%	50%	35%	44%	58%	42%	51%	52%	52%
Long-term/higher cost	40%	38%	43%	33%	51%	46%	33%	42%	42%	38%	39%
“Yes” on using capital outlay	51%	46%	52%	50%	49%	51%	51%	42%	55%	52%	48%

Cross-tabulation: Short-term/long-term opinions, and “yes” on capital outlay by age, and presence of a current district student (“Student, yes”), a past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”), and no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that age will not square with “overall,” because 7 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	18-34 (n=64)	35-55 (n=192)	Older than 55 (n=137)	Student, yes (n=153)	Student, past (n=123)	Student, never (n=124)
Short-term/lower cost	49%	47%	52%	47%	53%	48%	46%
Long-term/higher cost	40%	39%	38%	44%	40%	41%	40%
“Yes” on using capital outlay	51%	50%	52%	49%	60%	45%	45%

Finding 3: Patrons were equally conflicted about the wisdom of more schools, each with smaller student populations, versus fewer, larger schools. They were somewhat more definitive about preferring central facilities versus having multiple versions of aquatics centers, performing arts centers and the like spread across the district. But, they were torn as to whether the district should consider reconfiguring which grades attend which schools when a reallocation might be a better use of available space.

The second set of philosophical transition questions dealt with the patrons' preference for school size, whether it was wise to spend money on multiple special use facilities, and whether or not the district should adjust grade structures when school populations change significantly to make the best use of available space.

On the issue of school size, slightly more patrons (46%) said they preferred more schools, each with smaller student populations, than fewer, larger schools (40%). The remaining 14% said "don't know." Within the subgroups, more, smaller schools was the preference of:

- Those living east of K-7 (both north and south of Shawnee Mission Parkway)
- Those who had lived in the district up to 15 years
- Those with a Bachelor's Degree, a Master's Degree or higher
- Those ages 35 to 55
- Those with a current student in the district, or those who had never had a student in the district

Those who preferred fewer, larger schools were as follows:

- Those living west of K-7 (though the score difference was only 1%)
- Those who had lived in the district more than 15 years (again, just a 1% difference)
- Those with only a high school diploma, and those with a 2-year degree
- Those ages 18 to 34, and older than 55
- Those who had had a student in the district in the past, but who did not now

On the question of central facilities for such needs as aquatics and performing arts versus having multiple versions of these facilities at schools across the district, patrons seemed to prefer central facilities (47% to 35%, with 19% saying "don't know"). Central facilities were preferred among all the various subgroups except for those ages 18 to 34 (where the two options were tied).

Patrons were, however, modestly less enthusiastic about the idea that the district might consider shifting grade configurations within its school buildings to adapt to changing population patterns and space availability. Specifically, 47% said that it would be better for the district to expand facilities as needed than it would be to reconfigure grades, while 41% said reconfiguring grades should be considered. The remaining 13% said "don't know."

These questions produced the most interesting set of responses among the subgroups. Leaving things as they are was the preference for:

- All three geographic regions
- Those who had lived in the district 5 to 15 years
- Those with only a high school diploma, those with a Bachelor's Degree, and those with a Master's Degree or more
- Those 18 to 55
- Those with a current or a past district student

However, the following groups thought the district should consider reconfiguring to address space and student population inequity:

- Those who had lived in the district up to 5 years, and those who had lived here more than 15 years
- Those with a vocational or 2-year degree
- Those older than 55
- Those who had never had a student in the district

What all these results seem to suggest is there is a meaningful difference of opinion among patrons regarding the best number and size of schools, what to do with school buildings where the student population no longer fits the size, and (to a lesser extent) whether it is equitable for some buildings to have common facilities that would be shared, while others do not.

This lack of common ground means that, at least as of now, a meaningful group of patrons will be upset *no matter what the district decides to do* – on nearly any issue of this magnitude. Addressing this challenge will be neither fast nor easy. But, without diligent attention to defining clearly what the district believes is the approach that is in the best interest of patrons and students, and a steady delivery of that message and its reasons, progress on any issue will be an even more significant uphill climb than necessary.

34. Currently, schools in the De Soto School District are designed to house a certain number of students. The typical elementary school in the district is designed for 5 hundred and 50 students, the typical middle school is designed for 7 hundred and 50 students, and the typical high school is designed for 1 thousand students. Some district patrons have said that they think the elementary schools and middle schools are large, and that the high schools are small, while others have said that the sizes are fine as they are. Generally speaking, do you think the district should focus on having more schools, each with small student populations spread out across the district so that students would go to a school closer to their homes, or fewer – but larger – schools at places in the district that would require students to travel further from their homes? Primary choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
More, smaller schools	46%
Fewer, larger schools	40%
Don’t know (not read)	14%

35. Why do you prefer more schools with smaller student populations? Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 182 respondents who answered “more, smaller schools” on question 34. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. After answering this question, respondent skipped to question 37.

Response	Number
Better student-to-teacher ratio helps learning	57
Kids can stay closer to home	54
Would be the best approach to solve the overcrowding problem	39
Encourages small town feeling/community spirit	25
Other (see below)	7

Verbatim “other” comments

Kids are known better by teachers and principals. Family atmosphere is helpful to the learning process.

Easier for kids to not get lost with a smaller student population.

The educational experience is better. We just left a district where the school population was too big.

It would be safer. There is so much violence out there.

The kids are all known by teachers. Kids don't get lost in the crowd.

In the future, the high school needs to be larger. But, at present, more smaller schools are preferred.

I think because of safety reasons, and because the teachers and students get to know each other.

36. Why do you prefer fewer schools, each with a larger student population?

Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 161 respondents who answered “fewer, larger schools” on question 34. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.

Response	Number
Would rather expand than build new	62
Less operating expense	43
High cost of building new buildings	23
Other (see below)	17
Keeps quality teachers	16

Verbatim “other” comments

I have been to both types of schools, and I know one can learn if one wants to.

Because of where the schools are located. It causes overcrowding.

I like it especially at the middle and high schools. Larger schools can offer a richer curriculum and bring in specialists to teach.

Because the schools were built too small.

Don't want or think we need any more schools.

Do not close down schools. They closed down 2 buildings, then needed more buildings.

We have 3 elementary schools so crowded and too close together. They should have spread them out more.

To better utilize current facilities.

We have the highest tax bracket in De Soto.

Most of the population is right near the main middle school and high school. Not very many would have to travel very far to go to school.

They need larger buildings. They should follow the Las Vegas plan. They keep schools open all year long. They go for 3 months and then have a 3-week break. Multiple schools sit empty in Shawnee Mission.

Maximize use of current facilities.

If they can keep the classes small, they won't have to play catch-up on population.

Utilize campuses as they are.

Larger schools are more efficient.

It is wasting money to just throw schools out there and waste land.

37. Generally speaking, do you think that the district should focus on saving money by having centralized facilities such as performing arts centers and aquatics centers that would be used by students from different schools, or would it be better to have such facilities at multiple locations throughout the district? Primary choices were read to respondents. "Don't know" was not read.

Response	Percentage
Central facilities	47%
Multiple locations	35%
Don't know (not read)	19%

38. Generally speaking, do you think that the district should consider reconfiguring which grades attend which schools as necessary in order to maximize the use of current space, or would you prefer to leave the grades as they are configured right now and address space concerns through building and expansion projects? Primary choices were read to respondents. "Don't know" was not read.

Response	Percentage
Consider reconfiguring	41%
Leave as is/build and expand as necessary	47%
Don't know (not read)	13%

Cross-tabulation: Opinions on more/fewer schools, central facilities/multiple locations, and reconfiguring option by length of time living in the district, and by educational status. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that educational status will not square with “overall,” because 4 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	W/K-7 (n=80)	E/K-7, N/SMP (n=260)	E/K-7, S/SMP (n=60)	Up to 5 years (n=65)	5 to 15 years (n=142)	More than 15 years (n=193)	HS Grad or less (n=86)	Voc/2- year degree (n=107)	Bachelor’s Degree (n=159)	More than Bachelor’s Degree (n=44)
More, smaller schools	46%	39%	48%	45%	49%	47%	43%	41%	39%	48%	59%
Fewer, larger schools	40%	40%	41%	38%	34%	39%	44%	47%	45%	35%	34%
Central facilities	47%	48%	47%	45%	46%	44%	48%	40%	48%	46%	59%
Multiple locations	35%	39%	34%	35%	35%	39%	32%	35%	36%	37%	25%
Consider reconfiguring	41%	39%	43%	35%	48%	27%	48%	41%	48%	38%	32%
Do NOT consider reconfiguring	47%	48%	45%	53%	46%	55%	40%	47%	37%	51%	52%

Cross-tabulation: Opinions on more/fewer schools, central facilities/multiple locations, and reconfiguring option by age, and presence of a current district student (“Student, yes”), a past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”), and no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that age will not square with “overall,” because 7 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	18-34 (n=64)	35-55 (n=192)	Older than 55 (n=137)	Student, yes (n=153)	Student, past (n=123)	Student, never (n=124)
More, smaller schools	46%	38%	51%	41%	48%	37%	50%
Fewer, larger schools	40%	45%	36%	43%	37%	51%	34%
Central facilities	47%	39%	45%	52%	44%	52%	44%
Multiple locations	35%	39%	41%	26%	39%	28%	37%
Consider reconfiguring	41%	42%	38%	45%	37%	42%	44%
Do NOT consider reconfiguring	47%	45%	51%	40%	52%	45%	42%

Finding 4: Patrons find significant favor with the idea of the district implementing an all-day kindergarten program, if the funds and space were available.

The final transition question asked patrons whether they would support the district implementing an all-day kindergarten program, if the resources were available and the space could be found.

The idea was quite popular, as 67% said they would either “strongly favor” or “favor” this idea, while only 26% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it. The remaining 7% said “don’t know.”

39. If the district had adequate space and the necessary resources to implement an all-day kindergarten program, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly in favor of implementing an all-day kindergarten program	27%
In favor	40%
Opposed	22%
Strongly opposed	4%
Don’t know (not read)	7%

Finding 5: When asked why the most recent two bond issue proposals were defeated at the ballot box, more than half of the survey respondents said that patrons were frightened off by the tax increase that would have resulted.

To begin the discussion about a potential future bond issue, patrons were asked to share their perspective on why voters said “no” in 2007 to two separate district proposals.

The most popular answer (given by 224 of the 400 respondents) was that the proposed tax burden was greater than patrons were willing to bear.

Other popular answers dealt with a feeling that “the district wastes money” (36 respondents), that the proposal didn’t have enough emphasis on academics (25), that the project list was too big and/or that not all the projects were necessary (24), and that the district should just “use the resources it has” (23).

The responses to this question seem logical, considering the pattern of the grading scores seen earlier on district/patron relationship issues (and, specifically, on how tax dollars are used) and will echo as the specific projects for a potential future bond issue, and the prospective cost, are presented for survey respondents to evaluate.

40. As you may know, in 2007, the De Soto School District presented two separate bond issue proposals to voters. Why do you think district patrons defeated those proposals? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Only the top answers are displayed.*

Response	Number
Because of the tax increase that would result	224
Because the district wastes money	36
Other (see below)	28
Not enough emphasis on academics	25
Project list was too big/not all projects were needed	24
Should just use the resources it already has	23
Don’t know/not sure	21
Cost of projects was too high	19

Verbatim “other” comments

On the west side, the money seems to go to the east side. When Shawnee was annexed to De Soto, people felt it got advantages over the rest of De Soto.

I will never support building more schools and will remind the board of Overland Park's example. In the future, some will have to close and there are too many people on a fixed income here.

Heard it was confusing.

There is not enough industry here to offset outrageous taxes.

Because they are tired of paying for nice schools for the rest of the district and not putting that money in De Soto.

Because I don't think the people in the district want any more proposals. There is not that much growth in the district.

They put in a lot of extra proposals such as a district maintenance building. It was too expensive already to add on unnecessary things.

They were too broad in the issues. We didn't know where the money was going.

They should use what they have. They got rid of 2 buildings.

There was a lack of trust in the school board that was caused by 2 school board members who spread false ideas. How money is managed is misperceived by patrons.

They were asking for a lot of money and not saying what the money is used for.

Because I think they lied to patrons. There are a lot of hidden costs. There is never an end to the taxes. We are still paying for past bond issues.

There are a lot of elderly people who live in the district, and I think they are afraid of change.

They are tired of added bond issues every couple of years.

We don't need artificial turf.

There was a lot of confusion about how the money was being spent.

They were defeated because administration did not listen to the excellent teachers who chose to leave the district. They were begged to allow the teachers to give exit evaluations and the district refused to do so. People were upset.

We do not need all these buildings. They do not plan ahead.

Many do not have children anymore and are on fixed incomes.

A board member was against it. The lack of unified support by the board probably confused many people.

They weren't informed enough.

Because the patrons wonder why the district is still building with too many extras and overpaying contractors.

People were under the impression they were voting on large sports complex.

They didn't believe in what the school board has done in the past. The east side of the district gets the best. The west side gets what's left.

Basic lack of trust in the district is at the root of the defeat.

They need to slow down. People were fearful of too much building. I hate to see them build too much and have to close schools later like what happened in the Shawnee Mission District.

I was surprised. I thought the last one would pass.

Finding 6: Patrons find favor with expanding the two high schools, rather than building a third one.

The project section of the survey opened with a presentation of the two options being considered for the high school crowding dilemma: expand the current facilities, or build a third high school.

Patrons were presented with a matter-of-fact description of each option, and then asked whether they would be more likely to vote in favor of a bond proposal or more likely to vote against if the district chose expansion rather than a third high school, or if that option would have no impact on their voting decision. The process was then repeated for the third high school, rather than the expansion option.

While there was some support for a third high school, the current opinion of the surveyed patrons is that expanding the two high schools is the better option. Specifically, 56% said that this choice would make them more likely to vote in favor of a bond issue proposal, while only 31% said the same thing about a third high school. In each subgroup, the expansion option was the clear preference over the third high school.

As part of its ongoing planning process, the district is conducting this survey to learn from patrons what they would like to have in any future bond issue proposals. I'm now going to read to you brief descriptions of a number of ideas that are being considered for such a future proposal to find out your thoughts on each one.

41. One of the issues being considered involves potential changes for high school students and their families. One of the ideas that has been suggested is to expand each of the two existing high schools to address the growth in the population of high school students. The other option would be to build a new high school on land owned by the district that is west of K-7 highway. If a new high school were built, the two current high schools would be upgraded, but not expanded. Building a new high school would mean higher construction costs than would be the case if the district chose to expand the current high schools instead, but it would result in three schools that would each have smaller student populations. If the district proposed the first option – that is, expanding the two high schools, rather than building a third high school – would you be... Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor of a proposal	56%
More likely to vote against	19%
Would make no difference	22%
Don’t know (not read)	3%

42. What if the district instead proposed building a third high school, rather than expanding the current high schools, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. "Don't know" was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	31%
More likely to vote against	48%
Would make no difference	17%
Don't know (not read)	4%

Cross-tabulation: Opinions on high school options by length of time living in the district, and by educational status. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that educational status will not square with “overall,” because 4 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	W/K-7 (n=80)	E/K-7, N/SMP (n=260)	E/K-7, S/SMP (n=60)	Up to 5 years (n=65)	5 to 15 years (n=142)	More than 15 years (n=193)	HS Grad or less (n=86)	Voc/2- year degree (n=107)	Bachelor’s Degree (n=159)	More than Bachelor’s Degree (n=44)
Favor/expanding existing high schools	56%	64%	55%	47%	49%	61%	54%	59%	56%	56%	45%
Oppose/expanding existing high schools	19%	19%	19%	22%	22%	18%	20%	21%	23%	16%	18%
Favor/third HS	31%	25%	32%	35%	28%	37%	28%	27%	34%	34%	27%
Oppose/third HS	48%	58%	47%	38%	45%	45%	51%	51%	52%	44%	41%

Cross-tabulation: Opinions on high school options by age, and presence of a current district student (“Student, yes”), a past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”), and no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that age will not square with “overall,” because 7 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	18-34 (n=64)	35-55 (n=192)	Older than 55 (n=137)	Student, yes (n=153)	Student, past (n=123)	Student, never (n=124)
Favor/expanding existing high schools	56%	53%	56%	58%	52%	64%	52%
Oppose/expanding existing high schools	19%	23%	18%	20%	22%	13%	22%
Favor/third HS	31%	31%	31%	33%	31%	27%	35%
Oppose/third HS	48%	53%	48%	46%	48%	53%	43%

Finding 7: Patrons expressed strong support for expanding security systems and technology for students, and were modestly in favor of a new elementary school in the northern part of the district. They were ambivalent about a new elementary school in De Soto, were modestly against an additional Early Childhood Center and a central Performing Arts Center, and were more clearly in opposition to advance land purchases and artificial turf.

After addressing the high school issue, patrons were then presented with eight other concepts and asked if the inclusion of each in a future bond issue proposal would make them more likely to vote in favor, more likely to vote against, or make no difference in their voting decision.

The results are an echo of the seeming concern over taxes and the specific project list that was heard earlier in the survey. Of the eight projects, only two drew rave reviews:

- Security upgrades – 71% “more likely to vote in favor”
- Technology enhancements for students – 64% “more likely to vote in favor”

The next most popular project – a new elementary school in the northern part of the district – drew 44% “more likely to vote in favor” results, but also had 32% saying including this project would make them “more likely to vote against.”

The only other project which had higher “favor” than “against” scores was the new elementary school in De Soto. However, the support could hardly be called significant (28% “more likely to vote in favor,” 25% “more likely to vote against,” with 37% saying this project would “make no difference” in their voting decision).

The remaining projects drew more opposition than support. Specifically:

- New Early Childhood Center – 37% “favor” and 39% “against”
- Central Performing Arts Center – 34% “favor” and 39% “against”
- Buying land now for future school sites – 31% “favor” and 42% “against”
- Artificial turf – 19% “favor” and 60% “against”

It is particularly interesting that while patrons earlier said that they would prefer centralized PACs and such, they were modestly against the idea for a pending future bond issue. In essence, the message seems to be that they like the concept of centralized facilities, but they aren’t ready to pay for them right now.

The review of the subgroups showed that there was no one group that was *consistently* more positive or negative on this slate of ideas. This is not to say that there weren’t groups that expressed the opposite view of the overall survey participant audience; in fact, there were several cases of this happening – and some of the score differences were dramatic.

But, taken as a whole, the message that patrons seem to be sending with these results is that they don't see the urgency that the district does in many of the proposed ideas. While they will support core concepts such as safety and technology upgrades, the rest of the projects don't seem to have the same level of universal appeal.

In addition to the high school issue, the district is evaluating other ideas. For example... Questions 43 and 44 were kept together so the language (“a second new elementary school”) made sense to the respondents. Then, questions 45 through 50 were rotated to eliminate order bias.

43. What if the district proposed building a new elementary school on land that is already owned by the district that is in the northern portion of the district, west of K-7 and south of 55th Street in Shawnee. This school would serve up to 5 hundred and 50 students. You may recall that a school had been planned on this site in 2002, but it had to be removed, at that time, from the list of projects due to construction industry inflation. If the district included this school on a future proposal, would you be...Choices were read to respondents. “Don't know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	44%
More likely to vote against	32%
Would make no difference	18%
Don't know (not read)	7%

44. What if the district proposed building a second new elementary school close to the city of De Soto that would serve up to 5 hundred and 50 students, would you be...Choices were read to respondents. “Don't know” was not read.

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	28%
More likely to vote against	25%
Would make no difference	37%
Don't know (not read)	9%

45. What if the district proposed building an additional Early Childhood Center at about 71st and Choteau, on the same campus as Horizon Elementary. This would be the district’s second Early Childhood Center and would supplement the services provided at Countryside Learning Center, which is located on the west side of the district. Would you be....*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	37%
More likely to vote against	39%
Would make no difference	20%
Don’t know (not read)	5%

46. What if the district proposed installing cameras, entry doors and other safety and security systems at buildings across the district, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	71%
More likely to vote against	12%
Would make no difference	14%
Don’t know (not read)	4%

47. What if the district proposed upgrading classroom and building-level technology available to students and staff across the district, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	64%
More likely to vote against	10%
Would make no difference	16%
Don’t know (not read)	9%

48. What if the district proposed buying land now to be used for future school building sites as population growth in the district requires it, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	31%
More likely to vote against	42%
Would make no difference	16%
Don’t know (not read)	11%

49. What if the district proposed building a centrally located Performing Arts Center that would seat 1 thousand people and would be used by students across the district, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. "Don't know" was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	34%
More likely to vote against	39%
Would make no difference	23%
Don't know (not read)	5%

50. What if the district proposed installing all-weather artificial turf at its competitive athletic fields to allow for more year-round use, would you be...*Choices were read to respondents. "Don't know" was not read.*

Response	Percentage
More likely to vote in favor	19%
More likely to vote against	60%
Would make no difference	16%
Don't know (not read)	6%

Finding 8: This sense of being overwhelmed by what is clearly a costly project list is seen when patrons are asked to state whether they would support or oppose a proposal that was based on the ideas that had just been described. Only 33% said they would “strongly favor” or “favor” such a proposal, while 36% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose.”

Having now heard the ideas, patrons were asked how they would vote “if the election were held today.”

A total of just 33% said they would “strongly favor” or “favor” such a proposal, while 36% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it. The rest were scattered among categories which were not offered as answer options, but which were provided to the interviewer to use at his or her discretion, based on what the respondent was saying. Specifically, 6% were placed in “lean favor,” 1% in “lean oppose,” 7% said it “would depend on the final proposal/what was included,” 6% said it “would depend on the cost” and 10% said “don’t know.”

While it is mildly encouraging that 30% of the respondents have yet to make up their minds, it is disappointing that there are more opponents than supporters, as of January/February 2008. The subgroup analysis was no more encouraging, as the highest level of support was just 40% (those east of K-7 and south of Shawnee Mission Parkway).

51. Based on what you have just heard about the ideas being considered, how do you think you would vote if the election were held today? Would you...

“Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” “Would depend on the final proposal/what’s included,” “Would depend on what it costs,” and “Don’t know” were not read but were noted if mentioned – unaided – by the respondent.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	4%
Favor	29%
Lean favor (not read)	6%
Lean oppose (not read)	1%
Oppose	34%
Strongly oppose	2%
Would depend on the final proposal/ what’s included (not read)	7%
Would depend on what it costs (not read)	6%
Don’t know (not read)	10%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “strongly favor/favor” percentage by length of time living in the district, and by educational status. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that educational status will not square with “overall,” because 4 respondents refused to answer this question.

	Overall	W/K-7 (n=80)	E/K-7, N/SMP (n=260)	E/K-7, S/SMP (n=60)	Up to 5 years (n=65)	5 to 15 years (n=142)	More than 15 years (n=193)	HS Grad or less (n=86)	Voc/2- year degree (n=107)	Bachelor’s Degree (n=159)	More than Bachelor’s Degree (n=44)
Combined “strongly favor/favor” percentage	33%	33%	32%	40%	38%	35%	31%	33%	36%	31%	39%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “strongly favor/favor” percentage by age, and presence of a current district student (“Student, yes”), a past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”), and no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that age will not square with “overall,” because 7 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	18-34 (n=64)	35-55 (n=192)	Older than 55 (n=137)	Student, yes (n=153)	Student, past (n=123)	Student, never (n=124)
Combined “strongly favor/favor” percentage	33%	34%	33%	33%	35%	33%	31%

Finding 9: When asked about their tax tolerance, patrons sent a signal that they are currently unwilling to offer much support for a proposal with a substantive price tag.

Having now shared their thoughts about the wisdom of the ideas being considered, 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 \$202.50 per year for the owner of a \$150,000 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 \$202.50 per year were asked about a \$131.25 tax increase. Those who became supportive at that level skipped the remaining tax question, while those still in opposition were asked about a \$97.50 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.” Trends seen over 16 years of this approach to tax questions suggest that jumps in support of 5% or more between the tax levels imply 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).

The results here suggest that while there may be a number that patrons have in mind, it doesn’t appear to be one of the ones proposed via this survey.

Specifically, support at the top tax level was 32%. It jumped to 38% at the middle level, and then grew to 41% at the lowest tax level. Even assuming that the error factor for this survey of +/- 5% worked in the district’s favor, it still means only a 46% support level for the lowest tax increase figure, as of January/February 2008.

In fact, *only one subgroup* – those living east of K-7 and south of Shawnee Mission Parkway – achieved 50% support, and that was for the lowest tax level, suggesting that the concern about these potential tax levels was consistent across the entire district population, no matter where the respondent lived or his or her demographic characteristics.

52. If the final proposal resulted in a tax increase of about 202 dollars and 50 cents per year, or about 17 dollars a month, for the owner of a \$150,000 home, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the proposal? “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” and “Don’t know” were not read but were noted if mentioned – unaided – by the respondent.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	1%
Favor	31%
Lean favor (not read)	0%
Lean oppose (not read)	1%
Oppose	52%
Strongly oppose	6%
Don’t know (not read)	10%

53. If the final proposal resulted in a tax increase of about 131 dollars and 25 cents per year, or about 11 dollars a month, for the owner of a \$150,000 home, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the proposal? Asked only of the 271 respondents who did not answer “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor” on question 52. Those who did skipped to question 57. “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” and “Don’t know” were not read but were noted if mentioned – unaided – by the respondent. “Favor” percentages below represented the combined responses for questions 52 and 53, under the assumption that a respondent who would favor a higher tax level would favor this one as well.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	1%
Favor	37%
Lean favor (not read)	4%
Lean oppose (not read)	1%
Oppose	42%
Strongly oppose	5%
Don’t know (not read)	9%

54. If the final proposal resulted in a tax increase of about 97 dollars and 50 cents per year, or a little over 8 dollars per month, for the owner of a \$150,000 home, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the bond issue? *Asked only of the 231 respondents who did not answer “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor” on question 53. Those who did skipped to question 57. “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” and “Don’t know” were not read but were noted if mentioned – unaided – by the respondent. “Favor” percentages below represented the combined responses for questions 52, 53 and 54, under the assumption that a respondent who would favor a higher tax level would favor this one as well.*

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	1%
Favor	40%
Lean favor (not read)	5%
Lean oppose (not read)	0%
Oppose	40%
Strongly oppose	6%
Don’t know (not read)	9%

55. Why do you believe you would vote “no” on a proposal? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 181 respondents who answered “Lean oppose,” “Oppose,” or “Strongly oppose,” on question 54. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. After answering this question, respondents skipped to question 57.*

Response	Number
Taxes are too high right now	113
They had their chance/time to move on/tired of ongoing proposals	22
Too much on the proposal	21
Other (see below)	14
Don’t trust the district/administration	11

Verbatim “other” comments

We are the lowest income per capita and the highest taxed in Johnson County.

We were promised new schools when we came here. They were never built. Now that my grandchild lives near a new school, he cannot attend it because of the boundaries in place. It makes no sense.

I would favor the proposal if it was to buy books, increase salaries of teachers and add technology.

I do believe they spend too much now. I also don't believe the teachers are teaching the kids.

They keep coming back with their proposals. They tore down the elementary school my child went to, and it was in perfect condition. We are not in competition with Blue Valley.

They have to do some more planning of where the student population is and what their needs are.

Can't afford it.

Half of my property tax is for schools. It is not fair. I paid my share long ago and I am still paying.

I cannot support new buildings right now.

We have too many schools now and no money.

I'm sick of my taxes going up. My children were both handicapped and they went to school in Olathe.

Economy. We need to know more definite figures on the projects.

The district has wasted money, and they don't stick to any one proposal. They attach too many issues.

I worked for the district many years, and I saw the waste and the lack of care for the children and youth.

56. What additional information would you need before you would be able to decide how you would vote? *Answers below were coded from open-ended comments, meaning similar thoughts were gathered together to produce a tabulated answer. Asked only of the 37 respondents who answered "Don't know" on question 55. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Would need to see the final proposal	18
Just haven't thought about it	9
Don't know	6
Other (see below)	4

Verbatim “other” comments

I don't have a lot of interest in it yet since I don't have kids, and when I do they will attend a private school.

I would need to make sure it emphasizes learning over fancy buildings, and I would need to know what our tax burden would be.

I do not know where Horizon Elementary is located in relation to Countryside, which was talked about in an earlier question.

Some more details on locations of land. Exact amount of our tax increase.
Buildings need to be adequate in size

Cross-tabulation: Support at each tax level by length of time living in the district, and by educational status. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that educational status will not square with “overall,” because 4 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	W/K-7 (n=80)	E/K-7, N/SMP (n=260)	E/K-7, S/SMP (n=60)	Up to 5 years (n=65)	5 to 15 years (n=142)	More than 15 years (n=193)	HS Grad or less (n=86)	Voc/2- year degree (n=107)	Bachelor’s Degree (n=159)	More than Bachelor’s Degree (n=44)
\$202.50 per year	32%	33%	30%	43%	32%	35%	30%	27%	38%	32%	32%
\$131.25 per year	38%	36%	37%	48%	38%	40%	37%	34%	43%	39%	36%
\$97.50 per year	41%	39%	40%	50%	40%	43%	40%	34%	47%	43%	36%

Cross-tabulation: Support at each tax level by age, and presence of a current district student (“Student, yes”), a past district student, but no current student (“Student, past”), and no district student ever in the household (“Student, never”). Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that age will not square with “overall,” because 7 respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall	18-34 (n=64)	35-55 (n=192)	Older than 55 (n=137)	Student, yes (n=153)	Student, past (n=123)	Student, never (n=124)
\$202.50 per year	32%	28%	30%	37%	33%	34%	30%
\$131.25 per year	38%	34%	36%	43%	39%	41%	35%
\$97.50 per year	41%	34%	41%	45%	41%	45%	38%

Finding 10: Patrons appear interested in district news, as 6 of 19 potential sources for that news are consulted more often than “rarely,” with most of the remaining sources not far behind.

The final substantive section of the survey presented 19 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.

In the case of the De Soto School District, 6 sources achieved the 2.00 level (or the statistical equivalent):

- Friends and neighbors – 3.31 (or more often than “sometimes”)
- “School News” – 2.46
- *The Shawnee Dispatch* newspaper – 2.23
- *The Kansas City Star*, specifically the “Shawnee/Lenexa Neighborhood News” section – 2.12
- De Soto School teachers – 2.09
- De Soto School District Web site – 1.96

These results alone would suggest a solid – if not dramatic – level of interest in district news. But the fact that many of the remaining sources were not far behind in their scores suggests a broad-based interest in the district’s activities. (And, for the record, this is the highest score for a school Web site since that potential news source began to appear on this exercise.)

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, its chances of being received appear to be strong.

Finally, I’m wondering who you turn to for information about the activities of the De Soto School District. 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 De Soto School District. Let’s start with... Questions 57 through 75 were rotated to eliminate order bias.

57. *The Lenexa Centennial* newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	6%
Sometimes	15%
Rarely	11%
Never	68%

58. *The Shawnee Dispatch* newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	21%
Sometimes	23%
Rarely	15%
Never	42%

59. *The De Soto Explorer* newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	9%
Sometimes	11%
Rarely	7%
Never	74%

60. *The Johnson County Sun* newspaper

Response	Percentage
Frequently	4%
Sometimes	26%
Rarely	13%
Never	57%

61. *The Kansas City Star* newspaper; specifically the “Shawnee/Lenexa Neighborhood News” section

Response	Percentage
Frequently	12%
Sometimes	29%
Rarely	18%
Never	42%

62. Friends and neighbors

Response	Percentage
Frequently	44%
Sometimes	47%
Rarely	7%
Never	3%

63. De Soto School District teachers

Response	Percentage
Frequently	24%
Sometimes	14%
Rarely	9%
Never	53%

64. De Soto School building principals

Response	Percentage
Frequently	15%
Sometimes	10%
Rarely	17%
Never	58%

65. De Soto School Board members – either in person, or through news stories in which board members are quoted

Response	Percentage
Frequently	8%
Sometimes	19%
Rarely	14%
Never	60%

66. De Soto School District administration – either in person, or through news stories in which the superintendent and others in administration are quoted

Response	Percentage
Frequently	9%
Sometimes	20%
Rarely	11%
Never	60%

67. Local television news stations that report on De Soto School District news

Response	Percentage
Frequently	7%*
Sometimes	3%*
Rarely	11%
Never	79%

** Those who said “frequently” or “sometimes” were asked to identify the station they watch most often for district news; 15 said “KMBC-9,” 10 said “KSHB-41,” 8 said “WDAF-4,” 6 said “KCTV-5.”*

68. Local cable television stations that cover De Soto School District news

Response	Percentage
Frequently	0%
Sometimes	2%
Rarely	12%
Never	86%

69. Local radio stations that report on De Soto School District news

Response	Percentage
Frequently	1%
Sometimes	7%
Rarely	13%
Never	81%

** Those who said “frequently” or “sometimes” were asked to identify the station they listened to most often for district news; 9 said “KUDL”, 6 (each) said “KCMO” and “KMBZ,” 3 said “WDAF-FM,” 2 said “KFKF,” 1 (each) said “102” and “NPR.”*

70. The De Soto School District Web site

Response	Percentage
Frequently	18%
Sometimes	16%
Rarely	9%
Never	57%

71. The Parent Teacher Association, also known as the PTA

Response	Percentage
Frequently	9%
Sometimes	11%
Rarely	8%
Never	72%

72. Booster clubs

Response	Percentage
Frequently	6%
Sometimes	13%
Rarely	3%
Never	79%

73. The district's printed newsletter, called "schoolNews"

Response	Percentage
Frequently	24%
Sometimes	27%
Rarely	19%
Never	30%

74. Individual school electronic or printed newsletters

Response	Percentage
Frequently	18%
Sometimes	14%
Rarely	6%
Never	62%

75. E-mails from individual schools or from the district

Response	Percentage
Frequently	20%
Sometimes	11%
Rarely	6%
Never	64%

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

Source	4-point scale rating
Friends and neighbors	3.31
The district's printed newsletter called "School News"	2.46
<i>The Shawnee Dispatch</i> newspaper	2.23
<i>The Kansas City Star</i> newspaper, specifically the Shawnee/Lenexa Neighborhood News section	2.12
De Soto School District teachers	2.09
De Soto School District Web site	1.96
Individual school electronic or printed newsletters	1.88
E-mails from individual schools or from the district	1.87
De Soto School building principals	1.82
De Soto School District Administration	1.78
<i>The Johnson County Sun</i> newspaper	1.77
De Soto School Board members	1.75
<i>The Lenexa Centennial</i> newspaper	1.59
The Parent Teacher Association, also known as the PTA	1.56
<i>The De Soto Explorer</i> newspaper	1.54
Booster clubs	1.45
Local television news	1.37
Local radio stations	1.27
Local cable television stations	1.16

Finding 11: 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 region 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 De Soto School District, the survey group:

- Featured a good mix of newcomers (17%), those with some tenure (36%), and long-term or lifetime residents (49%).
- Included a solid group in each age category, including 17% who were 18 to 34, 48% who were 35 to 54, and 35% who were 55 or older.
- Had those with a variety of educational backgrounds.
- Included 153 current student households, 123 previous student households, and 124 households who had never had a district student.

My last few questions will help divide our interviews into groups

76. How long have you, yourself, lived within the boundaries of the De Soto School District? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents. “Don’t know” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	4%
2 years to 5 years	13%
More than 5 years to 10 years	17%
More than 10 years to 15 years	19%
More than 15 years	38%
I’ve lived here all my life	11%
Don’t know (not read)	0%

77. In what age group are you? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents. “Refused” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	3%
25 to 34	14%
35 to 44	23%
45 to 54	25%
55 to 64	22%
65 or older	13%
Refused (not read)	2%

78. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education that you, yourself, have completed...*Choices were read to respondents. “Refused” was not read.*

Response	Percentage
Less than a high school graduate	2%
High school graduate	19%
Vocational or technical school degree or certification	5%
2-year college degree from a community or junior college	22%
Bachelor’s or 4-year college degree	40%
Master’s degree	11%
Ph.D. or other doctoral degree	1%
Refused (don’t read)	1%

79. Are you, or is anyone in your immediate household, employed by the De Soto School District?

Response	Percentage
Yes	4%
No	96%

80. In what capacity is this person employed? Is it...*Asked only of the 16 respondents who answered “yes” on question 79. Primary answer choices were provided to the respondents. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Only those mentioned by at least 1 respondent listed below.*

Response	Number
Classroom teacher	10
Food service staff	3
Building maintenance staff	2
“Substitute”	1

81. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend school in the De Soto School District right now? *Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	142
Yes, both children and grandchildren	11
Yes, grandchildren	58
No	189

82. Do you have any children or grandchildren who previously were students in the district, but who have graduated? *Asked only of the 247 respondents who did NOT answer question 81 either “Yes, children,” or “Yes, children and grandchildren.” Those who did skipped to question 84. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	115
Yes, both children and grandchildren	8
Yes, grandchildren	31
No	93

83. Do you have any children or grandchildren who attend private or parochial school right now or who are home-schooled? *Asked only of the 124 respondents who did NOT answer question 82 either “Yes, children,” or “Yes, children and grandchildren.” Those who did skipped to question 84. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Yes, children	16
Yes, both children and grandchildren	2
Yes, grandchildren	19
No	87

84. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	53%
Male	47%

Summary

The January/February 2008 survey of 400 patrons of the De Soto USD 232 School District shows a population that:

- Is highly satisfied with what takes place at the building level and with those who deliver the “educational product,” but has some concerns about areas related to the district/patron relationship.
- Is conflicted over whether short-term, lower-cost solutions or long-term, higher-cost options are the better choice.
- Would like the district to consider using capital outlay funds for smaller projects.
- Has a difference of opinion about whether schools should be small and numerous, or large and fewer, and is mixed on whether the district should consider grade reallocation to make better use of space.
- Would mostly prefer to have centralized facilities such as PACs and aquatics centers, but also includes a segment of patrons who would prefer multiple facilities spread throughout the district.
- Would like the district to be able to offer all-day kindergarten as an option, if the funds and space were available to do so.
- Feels that the most recent proposals were defeated at the ballot box because of the high price tag and, to a lesser extent, because of questions about the wisdom (or need) of some of the projects on the list.
- Prefers the idea of expanding the existing high schools versus adding a third high school.
- Finds significant favor with proposals to upgrade security systems and technology for students, and is modestly interested in the idea of a new elementary school in the northern part of the district, but is currently ambivalent or against the other concepts being considered
- Is not particularly enthusiastic about either the idea of voting “yes” at this time for the concepts which were presented, or about the three potential tax levels.
- Has an acceptable level of interest in the district, and consults a variety of sources to get updates.

History has shown that three factors must be in place for a district to see success at the ballot box. These so-called “three legs of the stool” are:

- Patrons must think the district is doing a good job
- They must like the ideas being presented well enough to pay for them, if a tax increase would be required
- And they must be interested in what is taking place in the district

In the case of the De Soto USD 232 School District, the results are mixed.

Clearly, district patrons think that the education that students are receiving is of high quality, and they praise those responsible for delivering it. Yet, they clearly have a pattern of concern about certain aspects of the district’s inner workings. Whether those concerns are true interest, or simply frustration, is impossible to judge. But, this is an issue that will continue to hamstring the district if not addressed.

They are interested in what is taking place in the district, and, although they do primarily consult their friends and neighbors via “over the back fence” conversations, they also read newspapers and the school’s own printed newsletter.

The real issue, quite clearly, is that they don’t find favor with most of the ideas currently under consideration, and they have extremely limited interest in adding to their tax burden, at this time, to support these concepts.

What makes this situation most challenging is that the reaction is not a blasé one to the ideas that don’t generate overwhelming excitement (which would suggest simply a need to educate patrons on the wisdom of these concepts), but opposition.

The tone of the comments is also quite telling. There is a sense of fatigue among the survey population with a re-presentation of ideas that have already been voted down. And, there is clear message that any future proposals should be more step-wise rather than broad-based, attacking the most necessary challenges today for a budget that patrons can support, while laying the groundwork through conversation and education for future proposals, which would tackle the larger needs.