



Community Attitude Survey Regarding the Rootstown Schools

May 2016

16-3105

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Survey Purpose and Methodology

This report presents the findings of a telephone survey conducted with 256 likely voters in the Rootstown Local School District by TRIAD Research Group. To reflect those likely to vote in November 2016, voters who voted in one or more of the last four general elections, plus any new registered voters was selected. The survey was conducted between May 9 and 18, 2016 and has a margin of error of $\pm 6\%$ at the 95% confidence level. Upon completion, the results were weighted on age and gender to be more representative of likely voters in the district.

The main purposes of the survey were to examine ...

- Community opinions of the Rootstown Schools
- Voters' perceptions of the district's school buildings and opinion of replacing the three current buildings with one new school
- Various reasons for and against building one new school for the district
- Support for a possible bond issue and the impact creating a JEDD would have on their support.

Tables showing a demographic breakdown of the results have been provided. Note that due to the small number of 18 to 34 year olds surveyed, they were combined with voters age 35 to 49.

A fifth of the voters surveyed (20%) indicated that they have children attending the Rootstown Schools this year. Another 7% have school-aged children who do not attend the Rootstown Schools. Since this is a small group, they were combined with the three-fourths respondents (73%) who do not have any school-aged children. This group is referred to as 'non-parents' in the report.

Only 20 respondents fall in the Probably Against voter subgroup. This too is a small group, but we left them stand alone since it is important to understand how they differ from those in the Definitely Against subgroup. Their results should be viewed with caution.

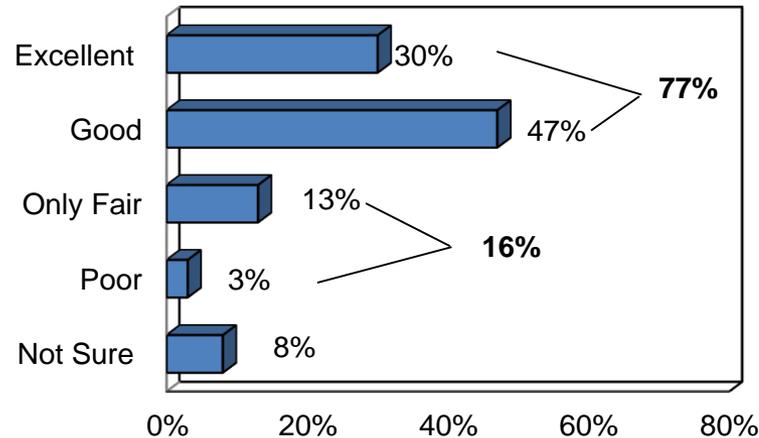
We created two regions for geographic analysis. Precincts A, C, D & E are referred to as the region North of Tallmadge Road and Precincts B, F & G make up the region South of Tallmadge Road.

Attitudes toward the Rootstown Schools

- Quality of Education
- How Informed about the Schools
- Schools' Use of Money
- Condition of Current Buildings
- Support for Building Plan
- Preferred Location for New School

The Rootstown Schools received a good quality of education rating.

Q1 SCHOOLS' QUALITY OF EDUCATION RATING



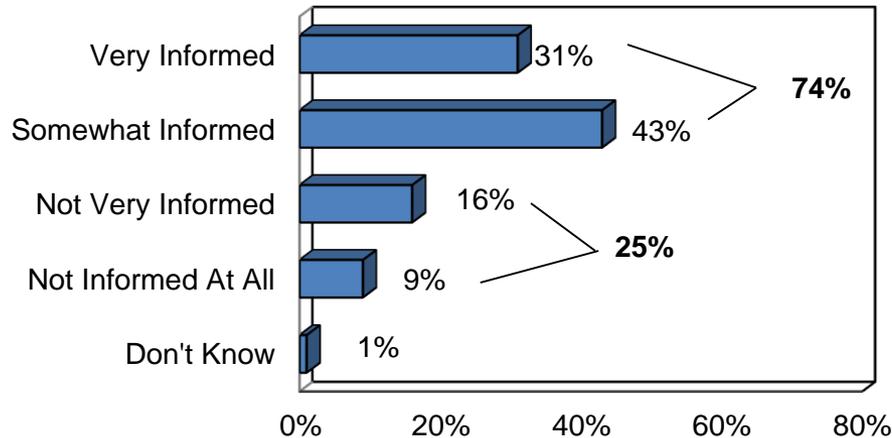
Three-fourths of voters (77%) rated the quality of education positively. Of these, 30% rated the quality **excellent** while 47% said it is **good**. Just 16% rated it only fair (13%) or poor (3%). The remaining 8% could not rate it. This is a good rating.

More than three-fourths of most demographic groups rated the quality of education positively.

- The positive rating was lowest among 18 to 49 year olds (65%) and Republicans (63%).
- But 89% of Rootstown school parents rated the quality positively, of which 59% said excellent.
- Among non-parents, 73% rated the quality positively.
- The schools' positive rating was higher among 50 to 64 year olds (78%) and senior citizens (83%).
- Also, those saying they would vote for the school bond issue were more likely to rate the quality positively (83%) than those voting against (72%).

Three-fourths also feel informed about the schools.

Q2 HOW INFORMED ABOUT THE ROOTSTOWN SCHOOLS

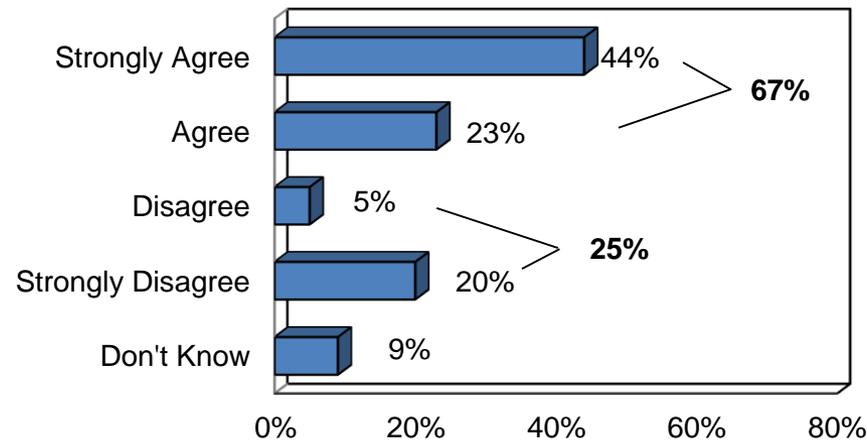


Similar to the quality, 74% of the voters said they are informed about the schools, of which 31% feel **very informed** and 43% said they are **somewhat informed**. A fourth of all voters said they are **not very** (16%) or **not at all** (9%) informed about the schools.

- Virtually all of the Rootstown school parents (98%) indicated that they are informed about the schools and 57% feel very informed.
- In contrast, 69% of non-parents said they are very or somewhat informed while 30% are not very or not at all informed. This could be improved.
- Other groups less informed about the schools included residents of 20 years or less (31% not very/not at all informed), 50 to 64 year olds (29%), Independents (33%) and those who voted in just one general election in the last four years (37%).
- Also, a third of the Probably For voters (32%) and Probably Against voters (29%) are not very informed about the schools. **These voters will need more information about the schools and the possible bond issue.**

Two-thirds of the voters trust the schools to do a good job with their tax money.

Q14a AGREE/DISAGREE I TRUST THE ROOTSTOWN SCHOOLS TO DO A GOOD JOB WITH THE TAX MONEY THEY RECEIVE



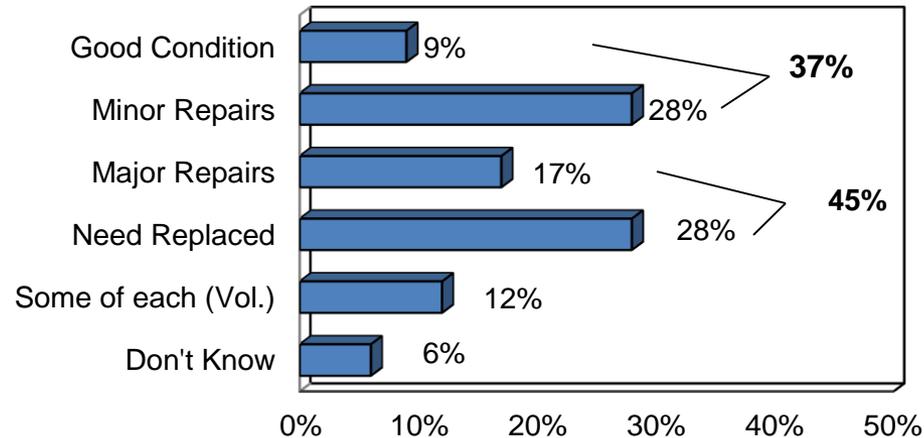
Overall, 67% of the voters agreed that *I trust the Rootstown Schools to do a good job with the tax money they receive*. A fourth (25%) disagreed with this. Only 9% said they don't know.

- This varied by support for the bond issue and only 43% of the Definitely Against voters agreed that they trust the schools with their tax money while half of them (50%) disagreed.
- A majority of all other groups agreed.

This appears to be a reason why some people would vote against the bond issue. The lack of trust by some voters tells us that it will be helpful to have some other spokespeople for the bond issue, such as parents, teachers, township officials, etc. It might also be helpful to name a citizens committee to oversee school spending if the bond issue passes.

More than two-fifths (45%) think the school buildings need major repairs or replaced.

Q3 PERCEIVED CONDITION OF THE DISTRICT'S SCHOOL BUILDINGS



Only 9% think Rootstown's school buildings are in **good condition** while 28% think they need only **minor repairs**. A plurality of voters (45%) think the school buildings need **major repairs** (17%) or need to be **replaced** (28%). There were 12% who voluntarily said **some of each**. Just 6% could not rate the condition of the district's school buildings.

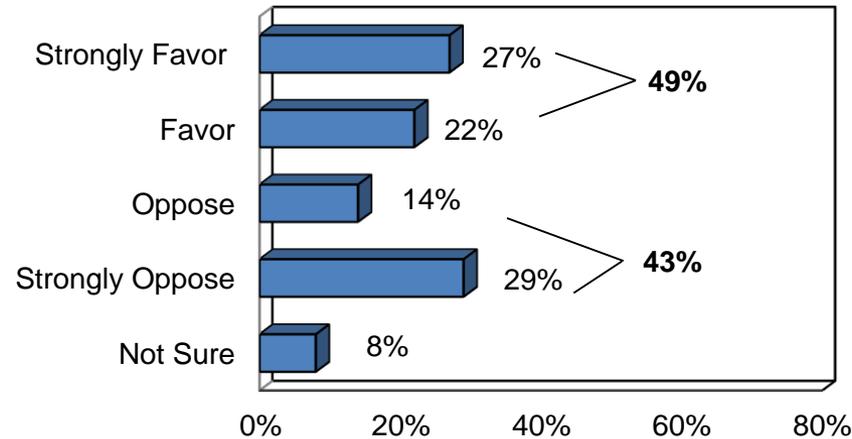
There was a strong correlation with this and the vote on the bond issue.

- That is, most of the Definitely For voters (72%) and Probably For voters (57%) think the school buildings need major repairs or replaced.
- But a majority of Probably Against (67%) and Definitely Against (60%) voters think the school buildings are in good condition or need minor repairs.
- Also, 70% of Rootstown school parents said the buildings need major repairs or replaced.
- But non-parents were more apt to say the buildings are in good condition or need minor repairs (44%) than said they need major repairs or replaced (39%).

Certainly one of the keys to passing a bond issue is making sure that more voters know about the condition of the school buildings and the benefits of having a new school for all the students.

By a slight margin, voters are in favor of building one new school to replace the three current school buildings.

Q4 FAVOR/OPPOSE BUILDING ONE NEW SCHOOL FOR ALL GRADES



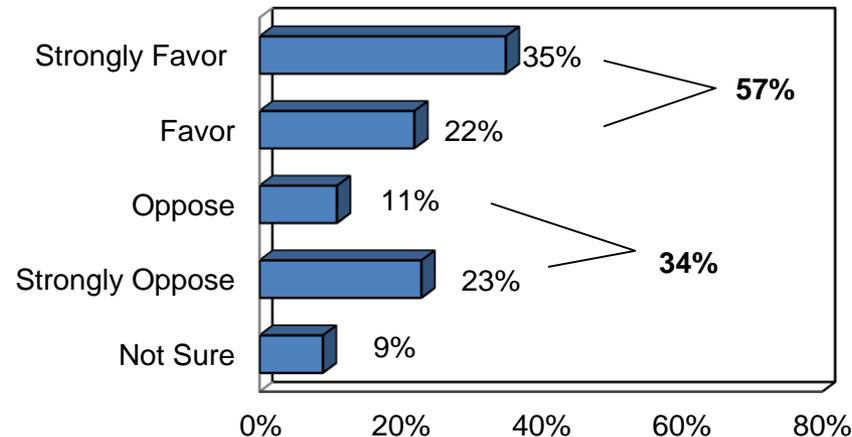
Voters were told that the district has been working with the State of Ohio to assess the buildings and the state has recommended building one new school for Kindergarten through 12th grade with separate wings for different grade levels. About half (49%) **avored** replacing the district's three current buildings with one new school for all Kindergarten through 12th grade students. Slightly fewer, but a still significant 43% of voters were **opposed** to this plan.

There were a number of demographic differences on this.

- Groups more likely to favor building one new school included Rootstown school parents (78/19), 18 to 49 year olds (69/29), residents of 20 years or less (66/26), Democrats (61/35), males (52/39) and those who voted in just one general election recently (57/30) as well as Definitely (79%) and Probably (71%) For voters.
- Groups more likely to oppose the plan to build one new school were non-parents (42/59), 50 to 64 year olds (35/52), residents of more than 20 years (39/53) and Republicans (32/57) as well as Definitely Against voters (16/77).
- Probably Against voters were evenly divided (49/51) as were senior citizens (45/46), females (46/46) and those who voted in 2, 3 or all 4 of the last four general elections (47/47).

There was more support for replacing the ballfields.

Q5 FAVOR/OPOSE REPLACING THE BALLFIELDS



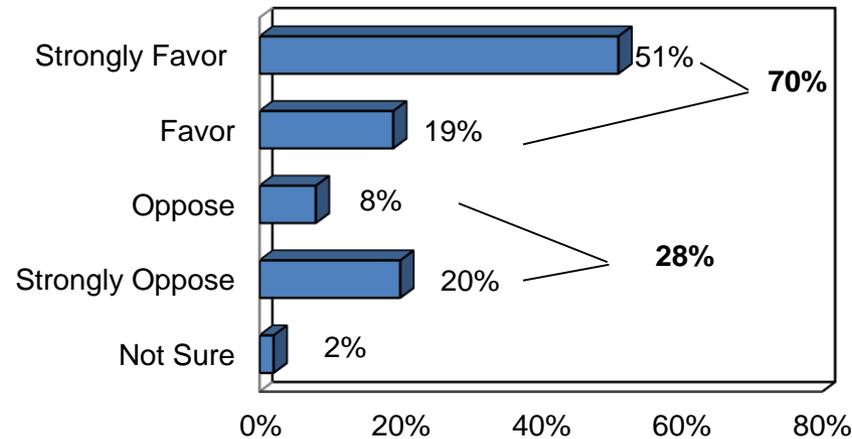
Voters were told that if the district builds a new school it will probably have to replace the football, baseball and softball fields. Over half (57%) said they are in favor of replacing the ballfields.

- Probably Against voters were also divided on replacing the ballfields if a new school is built (47/53).
- There was more support among Definitely Against voters for replacing the ballfields if a new school is built (27/65) than there was for building a new school (16/77).
- Also, over half of non-parents (52/40), 50 to 64 year olds (54/37) and residents of more than 20 years (56/36) were in favor of replacing the ballfields if a new school is built.

Replacing the ballfields doesn't appear to be a problem if a new school is built.

There was even more support for including an auditorium in the new school.

Q6 FAVOR/OPPOSE INCLUDING AN AUDITORIUM IN THE NEW SCHOOL



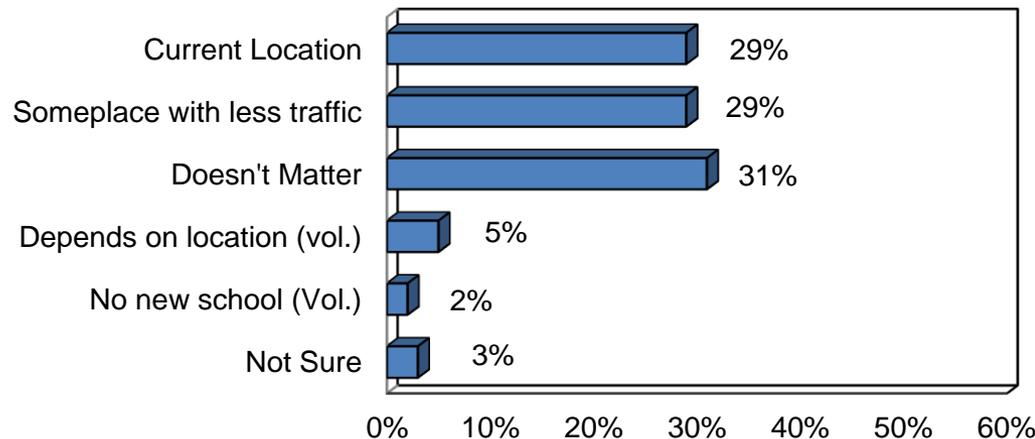
Overall, 70% of the voters favored including an auditorium in the new school so there would be a place for assemblies, plays and other performances. Of these, 51% were strongly in favor of this. Only 28% were opposed.

- With the exception of Definitely Against voters (43/57), well over half of all subgroups were in favor of including an auditorium in the new school.
- Support was particularly high among Definitely For (80/10) and Probably For (98/2) voters.

Including an auditorium will not be a deterrent to passing a bond issue for a new school. In fact, it might actually be a selling point for the bond issue.

Voters are divided on the location.

Q9 PREFERRED LOCATION IF DISTRICT BUILDS ONE NEW SCHOOL FOR ALL STUDENTS



We told voters that if a new school is built, it could be built at a different location with less traffic. About a third each preferred building a new school where the schools are currently located on Route 44 (29%). Just as many (29%) preferred a different location with less traffic. Another third (31%) said the location doesn't matter to them.

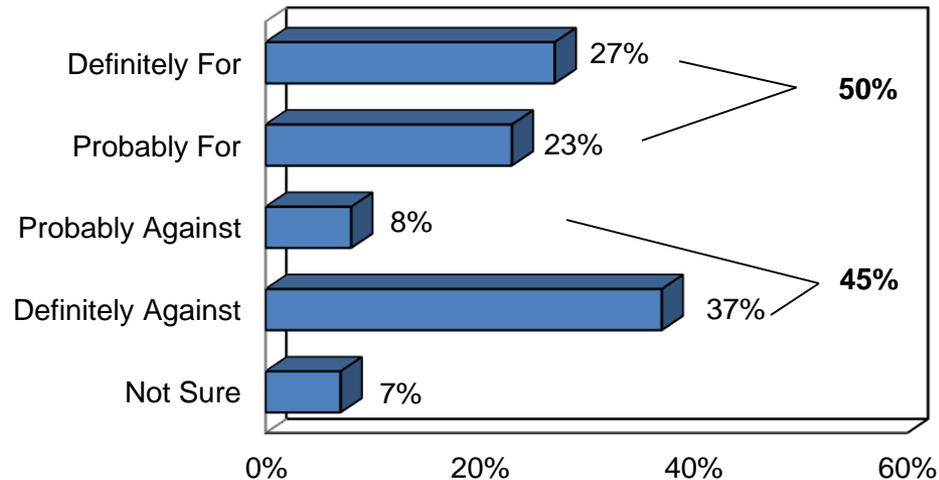
- Most subgroups were divided on this. But For voters expressed a slight preference for a location with less traffic (35%) than the current location (24%). About 30% said it doesn't matter.
- Rootstown Parents were evenly divided (29/29) while 25% said it doesn't matter and 12% weren't sure.
- Residents of 20 years or less had a slight preference for moving to different location (20/36) while residents of more than 20 years were more apt to prefer the current location (34/26).
- Probably Against voters were most likely to prefer the current location (52/23), but again, there are just 20 respondents in this subgroup so these results should be viewed with caution.

Support for a Possible Bond Issue

- Vote on a Bond Issue
- Reasons for Voting For or Against
- Impact of the JEDD & Knowing Taxes Will Be Lower

Half said they would support a \$32 million bond issue to pay for building a new school, ballfields and auditorium.

Q10 VOTE ON A \$32 MILLION BOND ISSUE TO BUILD A NEW SCHOOL, BALLFIELDS AND AN AUDITORIUM



Voters were told that *the total cost to build one new school, ballfields and an auditorium is \$47.5 million. With the money from the state, the Rootstown Schools would have to ask voters to pass a \$32 million bond issue which would cost \$235 a year for each \$100,000 of home value.* When asked how they would vote on this \$32 million bond issue for the schools, half (50%) said they would vote for it.

Nearly as many voters (45%) said they would vote against. Just 7% were undecided. This result is positive since more initially said they would vote for than against, but it is a concern that over a third of the voters were **definitely against** (37%) while only 27% said they would **definitely vote for**. Also, keep in mind that to some extent this reflects an “informed” vote since respondents were already given reasons why the district wants to replace the three current schools and told about the state’s financial contribution.

For this issue to pass, the schools will have to gain support among the Probably Against and Undecided voters as well as strengthen the support of the For voters.

The biggest demographic difference in support was by whether or not they have children in the Rootstown Schools.

That is ...

- 74% of Rootstown school parents were Definitely (58%) or Probably (16%) For voters. However, only a fifth of all voters are parents.
- Those who don't have children in the Rootstown Schools tended to oppose the bond issue with just 41% in favor and half (50%) opposed, and of these 41% were strongly opposed. And non-parents make up 73% of likely voters this fall.

Support also varied by how long they have lived in Rootstown.

- Three-fifths of residents of 20 years or less said they would vote for the bond issue (61/30).
- Over half of residents of more than 20 years said they would vote against (52%), but two-fifths (42%) would vote for.

Another significant difference was by voter history.

- Two-thirds of those who voted in just one of the last four general elections would vote for the bond issue (69/25).
- But half of those who voted in 2, 3 or all 4 of the last four general elections said they would vote against (49%) and 44% said they would vote for. **This indicates that the November election would be the best time to put this issue on the ballot since infrequent voters are more supportive.**

To pass this bond issue, the schools will have to target the Probably Against and Not Sure voters. They were more apt to be ...

- Senior citizens (21%)
- Residents of less than 20 years (18%)
- Voters north of Tallmadge Road (16%)
- Those who voted in 3 or 4 of the last four generals (17%)
- Females (16%) and
- Those who don't have children in the schools (16%).

The schools will have to run a district-wide campaign but some groups will need more attention than others.

About half of the bond issue supporters think a new school is needed.

Q11 REASONS FOR VOTING <u>FOR</u> THE BOND ISSUE (Two Responses Accepted)	
	Of Those Voting For %
Need new school, feel it's needed (safer, new equipment, handicapped accessible)	46
Education is important, need to/always support the schools, for the children, children are the future, for the future	33
Will help improve/maintain quality	9
Improve/increase property values, good for community	7
Kids go to Rootstown Schools, want the best for them	7
Not a lot of money	4
Like idea of having one school, one central location	4
Need to keep up with other communities	3
Need more information, concerned about the cost	8
*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses	

Many of the For voters said they would support the bond issue because they think a new school is needed (46%). Keep in mind that this is an 'informed' response since it was asked after we told voters why the district is considering a new school. Thus the percent who feel a new school is needed is higher than what we would see if this question was asked earlier in the survey. **The schools will still have to educate voters about the need for a new school.**

A third (33%) said education is important/need to support the schools.

Several other reasons were given by less than a tenth of the For voters.

Importantly, 8% of the For voters want more information before they would fully commit to supporting the bond issue and most of them wanted to know how much it would cost or if they could afford the increase.

Taxes and can't afford are the main reasons for opposing the bond issue.

Q11 REASONS FOR VOTING <u>AGAINST</u> THE BOND ISSUE (Two Responses Accepted)	
	Of Those Voting Against %
Don't want more taxes, high enough already, too high	38
Can't afford, retired, senior citizen, on a fixed income	27
Don't need a new school, use/repair the old ones, population is shrinking	15
Asking for too much money	11
Don't like plan to build one new school, don't want all ages together	7
Haven't made good use of money, waste money	6
Don't have children in school, doesn't benefit me	4
State should pay more/all, get money somewhere else	3
Should merge with another district	2
Need more information	3
*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses	

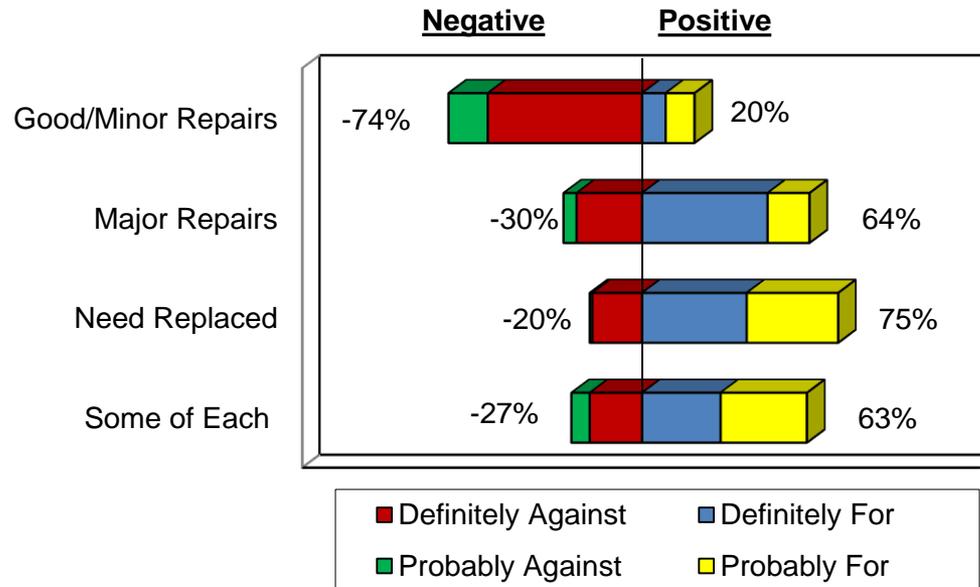
Typically, no more taxes is the main reason for voting against a tax issue, and here, 38% of the Against voters said this. Several other financial reasons were also mentioned including 27% who said they can't afford to pay any more taxes, 11% said the schools are asking for too much money and 3% said the state should pay more.

There were 15% who said the district doesn't need a new school, use/repair the old ones, while 7% said they don't like the plan to build one new school.

A few of the Against voters think the schools waste money (6%), 2% said the Rootstown Schools should merge with another district and 4% don't have children in the schools.

Voter's perceptions of the condition of the buildings is a major factor in how they would vote on the bond issue.

VOTE ON BOND ISSUE BY PERCEIVED CONDITION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

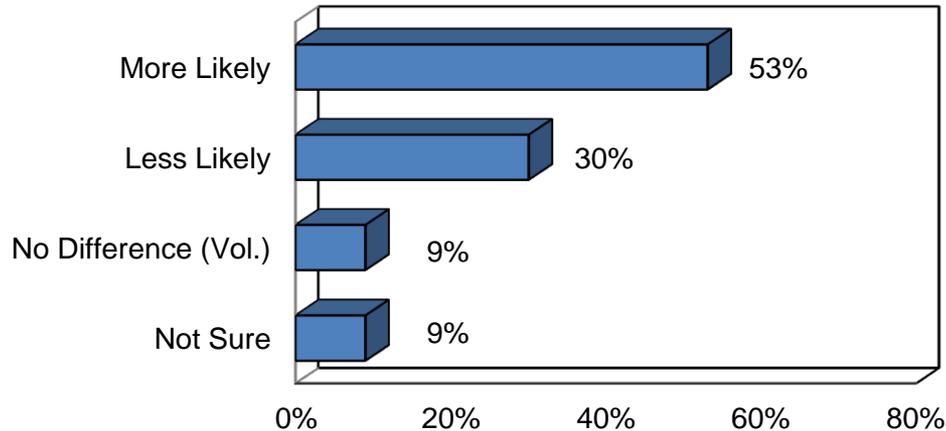


Both the district needs a new school and it doesn't need a new school were given as reasons for and against the bond issue. This graph shows a strong correlation between these two questions. That is 74% of those who think the current school buildings are in good condition or need minor repairs said they would vote against the bond issue. Well over half, but not all, of those who think the schools need major repairs (64%), replaced (75%) or some of each (63%) said they would vote for the bond issue.

It will help if the district can convince more voters that the current buildings need to be replaced.

Over half (53%) would be more supportive of the bond issue knowing about the JEDD and its impact on their taxes.

Q12 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING FOR THE BOND ISSUE KNOWING ABOUT THE JEDD AND THAT THIS WOULD DECREASE YOUR TAXES

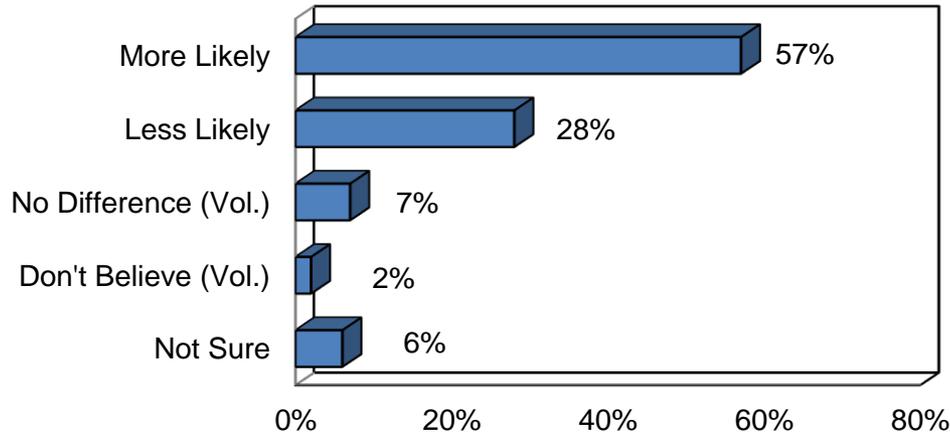


Voters were told that *if a new school is built in a different location, the district could sell the land where the schools are now and participate in a Joint Economic Development District with the township and the city of Kent. This means that the amount of taxes you would pay for the bond issue would go down.* Just over half (53%) said knowing this would make them **more likely** to vote for the bond issue.

- More than two-fifths of every subgroup were more likely to vote for the issue when told about selling the current land, participating in a JEDD and that it will make their taxes go down.
- This is a good reinforcing argument with the Definitely and Probably For voters as three-fourths were more likely to vote for (77% and 76%).

It is critical to tell voters that their taxes will go down by half or more if the district sells the current land and creates a JEDD to passing the bond issue.

Q13 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING FOR THE BOND ISSUE KNOWING THE COST WOULD START AT \$20 A MONTH FOR OWNER OF \$100,000 HOME AND WOULD GO DOWN BY HALF BECAUSE OF THE JEDD



Voters were also told that *the cost of the bond issue would start at about \$20 a month for the owner of a \$100,000 home, but with the JEDD, the township estimates that this amount would go down by half or more.* Knowing that, 57% would be **more likely** to vote for the bond issue. **This argument is key to passing the bond issue.**

- Now we see that 62% of the Probably Against voters and 45% of the Undecided voters were more likely to vote for the bond issue when told that their taxes would go down by half or more if district participates in the JEDD, from \$20 to start. Even 28% of the Definitely Against voters were more likely to vote for.
- This information also helps increase support among residents of more than 20 years (47% more likely), 50 to 64 year olds (49%) and senior citizens (51%).
- Voters' location preference also impacts this. That is, 71% of those who prefer building a new school in a different location and 56% of those who said the location doesn't matter to them were more likely to vote for when told about the JEDD and that it would reduce their taxes by half. But only 45% of those who preferred that the schools stay at their current location were positively impacted by this.

It will be a challenge to pass a \$32 million bond issue this fall.

To start, the chances of passing this bond issue are less than 50/50. Typically for an issue to have a good chance of passing, support in the survey must be 55% or higher and less than a third are opposed. This is because surveys measure what people say they will do and not their actual voting behavior.

Initially, just 50% support the bond issue and this was asked after they had been given the schools' reasons for wanting to build a new school and told that the state will give the district \$15.5 million for the new school. Also, 37% start out strongly against the bond issue which is problematic.

But these results occur before being told about the JEDD. Knowing that their taxes will be cut by half or more if the district sells the land at their current location and participates in a JEDD with the township and the city of Kent has the potential to change some voters' minds and strengthen the support of others.

However, this message is complicated and the district must be prepared to communicate a lot of information with the voters in order for them to understand the bond issue and the JEDD. We also think it will be helpful if the township and the city of Kent speak out in favor of the JEDD and confirm to voters that they want to participate in a JEDD with the schools and that residents' taxes will go down by half or more if the JEDD goes through.

Reasons For & Against The Bond Issue

- Agree/Disagree Statements about the Bond Issue
- Reasons to Build a New School
- Impact of State Money
- Preferred Way to Get Information

Rootstown voters want good schools, but they don't want to pay more taxes.

Q14 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BOND ISSUE AND NEED FOR NEW A SCHOOL

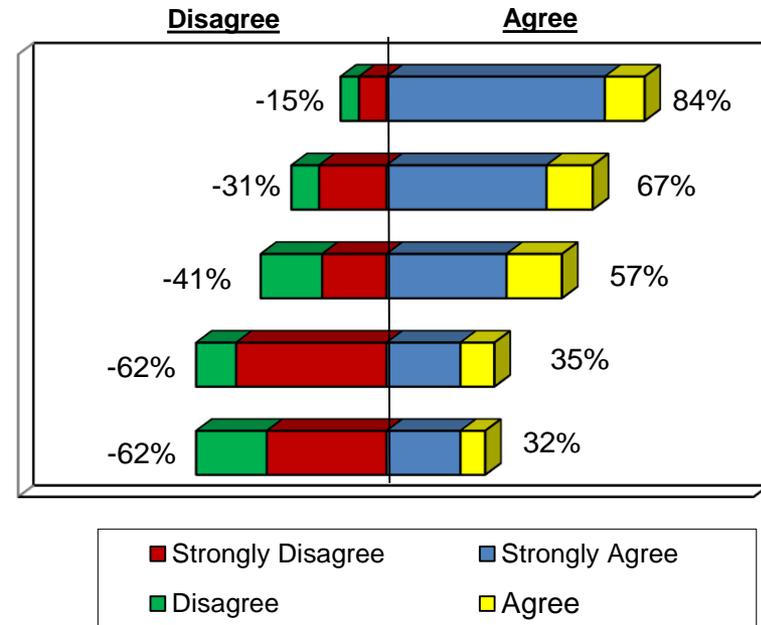
Improving our school buildings is important to keeping Rootstown a desirable place to live. (Q14c)

We need a new school so we can prepare our kids for college and jobs of the future. (Q14f)

The schools are important, but I can't afford to pay more taxes. (Q14b)

Rootstown doesn't need to build a new school. (Q14d)

I won't vote for bond issue if they plan to tear down Rootstown Middle School. (Q14e)



There was a high level of agreement with the two positive statements asked near the end of the survey, and these can be used as supporting arguments for the bond issue. That is ...

- 84% agreed that *improving our school buildings is important to keeping Rootstown a desirable place to live*. Of these, 71% **strongly agreed**. This is a good argument that will help reinforce support for the bond issue.
- Two-thirds (67%) agreed that *we need a new school so we can prepare our kids for college and jobs of the future* with over half (52%) **strongly agreeing**. A third of the voters (31%) **disagreed** with this.
 - A large majority of all subgroups agreed with these two statements. This included 61% of Definitely Against voters who agreed with the first statement, but just 35% of them agreed with the second one.

The strongest reason for voting against was taxes/affordability.

Typically need, importance and cost/affordability emerge as the main reasons for voting against a tax increase. In the Rootstown School District, the cost/affordability is the biggest concern. Over half of the voters in the district (57%) **agreed** that *the schools are important, but I can't afford to pay any more taxes*, of which 39% **strongly agreed**. Just two-fifths (41%) disagreed with this.

- Most of the Probably Against (92%) and Definitely Against (83%) voters agreed that they can't afford to pay more taxes as did 64% of the Undecided voters.
- Three-fourths of the Definitely For voters (77%) disagreed with this and half of the Probably For voters disagreed (53%), while 41% agreed.

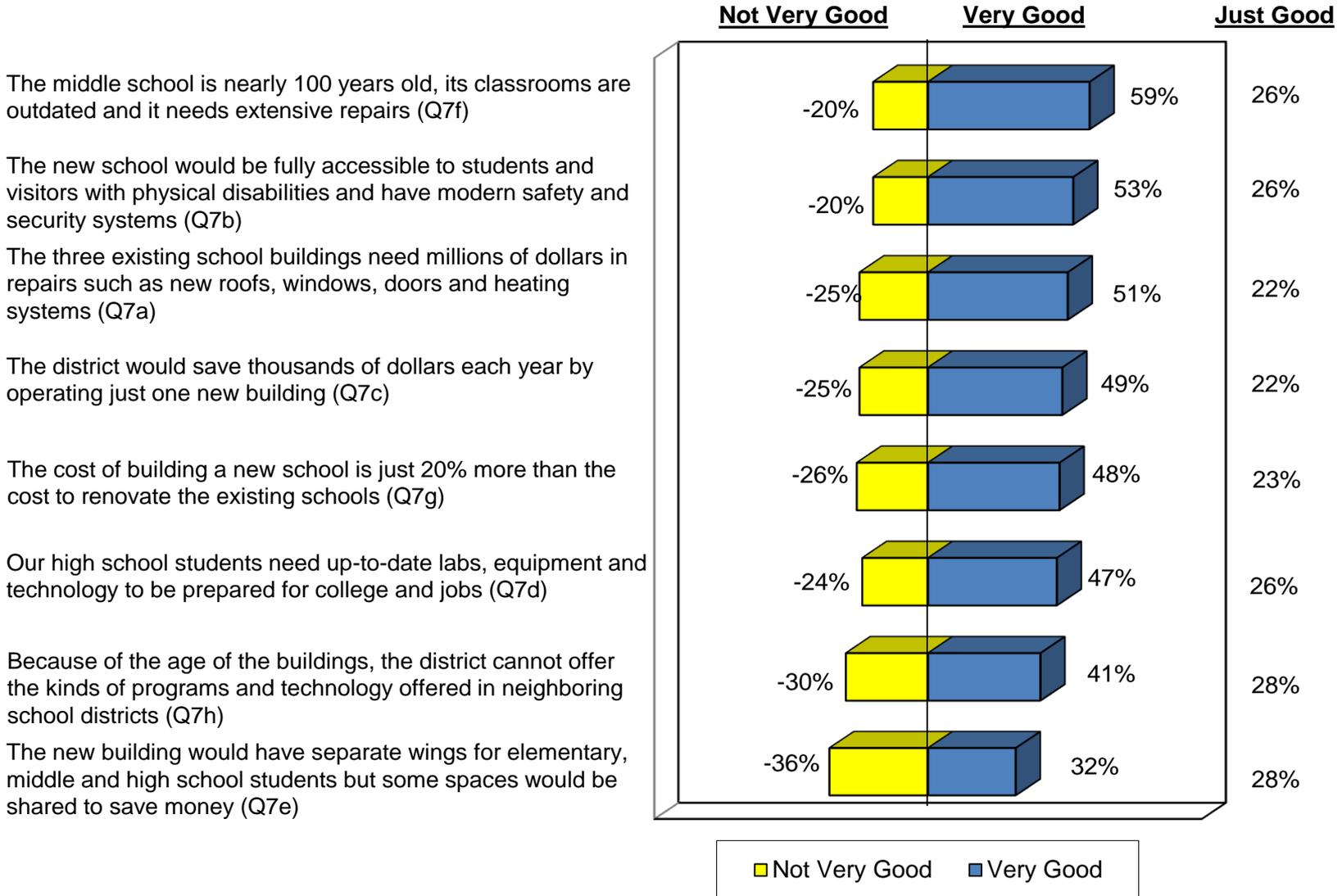
Keep in mind that this question was asked at the end of the survey after they were told about the JEDD and that it would decrease their taxes for the bond issue by half or more.

It would help if the schools can convince more voters that the current school buildings need to be replaced.

- Well over half (62%) disagreed that *Rootstown doesn't need to build a new school* but a third (35%) agreed with this. Half (50%) of Probably Against voters and 43% of 50 to 64 year olds agreed don't think a new school is needed.
- 62% of voters also disagreed that they *won't vote for a bond issue if they plan to tear down Rootstown Middle School* while 32% agreed. Most subgroups disagreed with this, but about two-fifths of Probably Against voters (44%), 50 to 64 year olds (36%) and senior citizens (38%) agreed.

Six of the eight reasons in favor of building a new school tested fairly well.

Q7 GOOD REASON OR NOT TO BUILD A NEW SCHOOL



The strongest reasons in favor were to replace the 100 year-old middle school and have handicapped accessible and safer buildings.

Of the eight reasons in favor tested, two were rated as very good reasons to build one new school by over half of respondents. They were:

- The middle school is nearly 100 years old, its classrooms are outdated and it needs extensive repairs (59% very good reason) and
- The new school would be fully accessible to students and visitors with physical disabilities and have modern safety and security systems (53%).

Several of the reasons related to saving money and they tested fairly well. That is, about half said each one is a very good reason to build a new school. These included:

- The three existing schools need millions of dollars in repairs (51%)
- The district would save thousands of dollars each year by operating just one new building (49%) and
- The cost of building a new school is just 20% more than the cost to renovate the existing schools (48%).
- Not as strong was telling voters that the new building would have separate wings for elementary, middle and high school students, but some spaces would be shared to save money. Just 32% said this is a very good reason while more (36%) said it's not a very good reason to build one new school. Perhaps some voters would prefer not to have younger and older students mixed together.

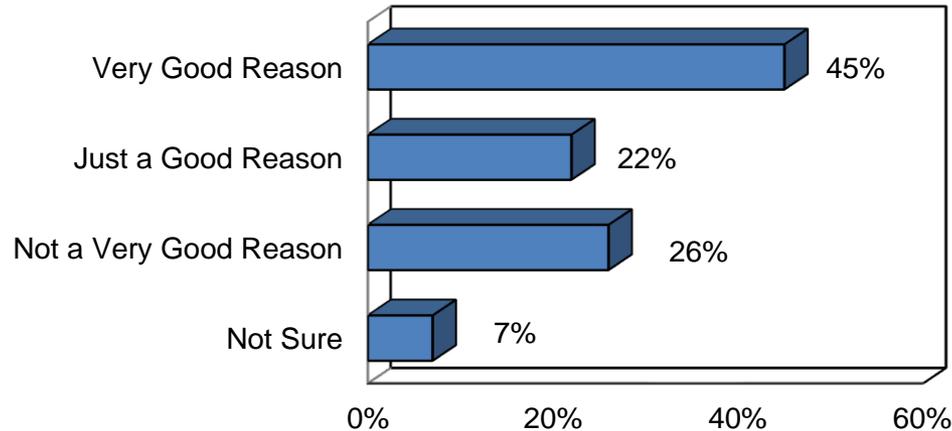
The two items related to improving the quality of education were not as strong as we might expect.

- The stronger of the two was that *our high school students need up-to-date labs, equipment and technology to be prepared for college and jobs*, with 47% saying this is a very good reason to build a new school.
- Just two-fifths said *because of the age of the buildings, the district cannot offer the kinds of programs and technology offered in neighboring school districts* is a very good reason. We often see that voters don't like to be compared to other districts, otherwise this might have tested better.

The schools should focus primarily on the first six reasons as these had the most impact with voters.

Less than half think getting \$15.5 million from the state is a very good reason to build a new school.

Q8 GOOD REASON OR NOT TO VOTE FOR THE BOND ISSUE KNOWING THE STATE WILL GIVE THE SCHOOLS \$15.5 MILLION



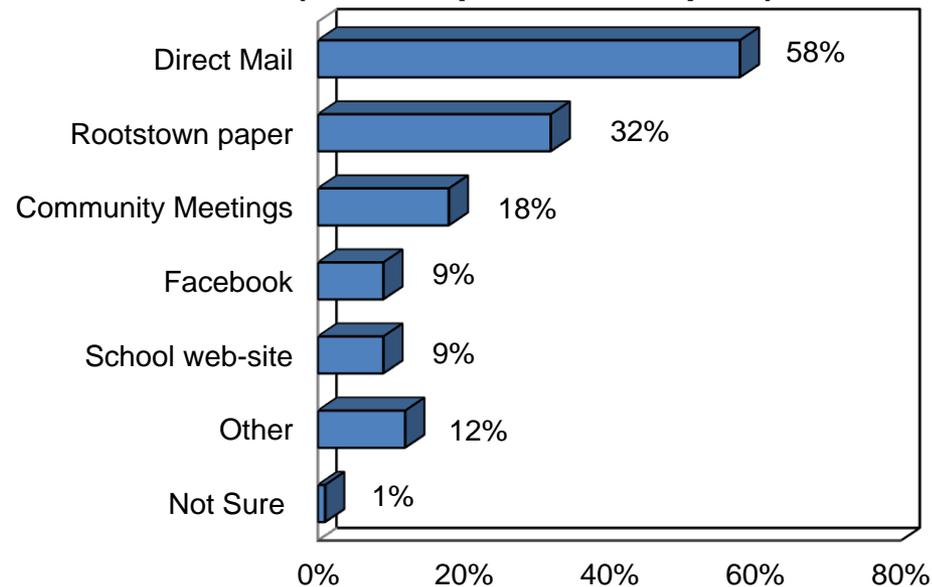
Overall, 45% said **very good reason** when told that *the State of Ohio will give the Rootstown Schools \$15.5 million if the district follows the state's recommendation to build one new school and passes a bond issue for the local share.*

- A large majority of the Definitely For (78%) and Probably For (63%) voters said this a very good reason to build a new school as did 44% of the Probably Against voters.

The district should use this argument since voters are concerned about the cost or affordability of the issue and other financial arguments tested fairly well. This argument might have more impact if more voters believe a new school is needed.

Direct mail is the preferred way of getting information about a possible bond issue.

Q15 HOW PREFER TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOND ISSUE (Two Responses Accepted)



Over half (58%) chose direct mail as one of the two ways they would prefer get information about the bond issue. A third (32%) mentioned the Rootstown newspaper as their preferred source of information. About a fifth (18%) were interested in attending a community meeting while just a tenth each preferred relying on Facebook (9%) or the school website (9%). **It might help if the district offers tours of the buildings so residents can see firsthand the condition of the buildings.**

- With the exception of Rootstown school parents, direct mail and the local newspaper were the top two preferences of all subgroups.
- Half of the parents (49%) also preferred direct mail. But some of them also mentioned the newspaper (23%), the school web-site (25%) and community meetings (25%) as well as Facebook (19%).

Key Findings

Rootstown voters have positive opinions of the schools which is helpful when trying to pass a tax issue.

- 74% said they are very (31%) or somewhat (43%) informed about the schools.
- 77% rated the quality of education excellent (30%) or good (47%).
- 67% agreed that they trust the schools to do a good job with the tax money they receive.

A significant minority of voters see the need to repair or replace the three existing schools.

- 45% said the three current school buildings either need major repairs (17%) or need to be replaced (28%), but over a third think the buildings only need minor repairs (28%) or are in good condition (9%).
- 62% disagreed that Rootstown doesn't need to build a new school, but a third agreed (35%)
- Similarly, 62% would not oppose the bond issue if the district tears down the middle school, but a third (32%) indicated that they would vote against.
- 49% are in favor of building one new school for all students to replace the three existing buildings, but 43% are opposed to this plan initially.
- Interestingly, support is higher for replacing the ballfields if a new school is built (57%) and for including an auditorium in the new school (70%). These additions might be selling points for a new school.

There is some support for the \$32 million bond issue, and it seems to increase with information about the JEDD.

- 50% started in favor of the bond issue. Keep in mind that this question was asked after respondents had heard reasons why the district is considering this plan so this result assumes that these reasons are communicated to voters.
- 57% were more likely to vote for after being told about selling the current land to participate in a JEDD with the township and the city of Kent and that doing so would reduce the cost of the bond issue by about half or more, from \$20 for the owner of a \$100,000 home.
- At the end of the survey, 67% of voters agreed that we need a new school so we can prepare our kids for college and jobs of the future, of which 52% **strongly** agreed.

Key Findings

The cost or affordability of the bond issue is the main reason for voting against as 57% of all voters agreed that they can't afford to pay more taxes. And most of the Against voters agreed with this (about 84%).

Also, half of the Definitely Against voters (50%) don't trust the schools with the tax money they receive.

To pass this issue, the school must first establish the need for a new school. The strongest reasons in favor of a new school related to the inadequate condition of the current buildings. These included:

- The middle school is nearly 100 years old, its classrooms are outdated and it needs extensive repairs (59% very good reason)
- The new school would be fully accessible to students and visitors with physical disabilities and it would have modern safety and security systems (53%) and
- Our students need up-to-date labs, equipment and technology to be prepared for college and jobs (47%).
- And against, voters responded favorably to including an auditorium in the new school (70% favor) and replacing the ballfields (57% favor).

With many voters concerned about the cost, the schools will also have to present strong financial reasons for building one new school. The JEDD reducing their taxes by half or more is certainly a very strong reasons in favor. But several other financial reasons can be used to help increase support. They were:

- The three existing schools need millions of dollars in repairs (51% very good reason)
- The district would save thousands of dollars each year by operating just one new building (49%)
- The cost of building a new school is just 20% more than the cost to renovate the existing schools (48%) and
- The state will give the district \$15.5 million to build one new school (45%).

Voters should also be reminded of the schools' importance to the community since this tested well.

- Fully, 71% of the voters **strongly** agreed that improving our school buildings is important to keeping Rootstown a desirable place to live. Another 13% agreed.