

BUUSD Parent / Taxpayer Survey – September/October 2019

Executive Summary

The Board of School Directors for the Barre Unified Union School District took a survey of Parents, Taxpayers, and other Stakeholders in September and October of 2019 for the purpose of allowing community members to share their thoughts and opinions about how, where, and how much the Board spends (or should be spending) on providing educational materials and services to the children of Barre City and Barre Town.

The Board took a similar survey of students within the district, the results of which will be tallied in the near future.

The Parent/Taxpayer survey was made available to residents via email, Facebook, social media, on the district's website, and in print. Printed copies were distributed to various locations around both Barre City and Barre Town, including Town/City Hall, Aldrich Library, and all of the school central offices.

Notification of the survey was provided via email, Facebook, social media, on the district's website, and through communications sent home with students.

As of October 4, the closing date of the survey, 409 respondents had registered their thoughts and opinions on a wide range of issues (reviewed below). Board members will use this information to inform their planning and decision-making as they begin their work as a unified board representing the students of Barre City and Barre Town.

Survey Results: *Note: Because some questions allowed for more than one answer, not all percentages for each question will add up to 100%*

Demographic Questions:

1. A majority of respondents (74%) indicated they are parents of students currently enrolled in the Barre Schools. A smaller number (17%) indicated they are community members with no students in the schools. The remainder of the respondents identified themselves as employees of the school district (8%) or parents of students attending private school (3%).
2. Of those who responded to the survey, a small majority (40%) were parents of students in the Barre Town School; followed by 33% who indicated they were parents of students at Spaulding High School (no town given). A minority of respondents (20%) were parents of students from Barre City. Only 2% of respondents said they were parents of a CVCC student.

3. Of all respondents, a majority (66%) have lived in Barre for more than 6 years, with the greatest percent of respondees (36%) indicating they have lived here for 20 years or more. Newcomers (0-5 years) represented about 21% of survey takers.
4. A significant majority of respondents (89%) reported owning their homes (which puts them squarely in the 'taxpayer' category), with 8.5% indicating they are renters.
5. When asked about their voting record on school elections and budgets, 81% indicated they always (47%) or usually (34%) voted. 15% seldom or never voted, and 6% reported that they were not registered voters.
6. When taxpayers who 'always' or 'usually' voted were asked about their primary motivation for doing so, 73% said they wanted to provide the best education possible for students in the Barre schools; 45% said it was because it is their right to vote; 28% indicated they wanted to keep their taxes low; and 10% said it depended on who was running for a seat on the board.
7. When asked where they most commonly get their information about the schools, voters indicated the following sources (listed in order of most commonly to least commonly):
 - a. Newsletters and communications sent home from school (52%)
 - b. From conversations with neighbors and friends (47%)
 - c. Via email from their students' teachers/administrators (37%)
 - d. From the District's website (36%)
 - e. From the Barre/Montpelier Times Argus (33%)
 - f. From Facebook (31%)
 - g. From other social media (20%)
 - h. From VT Digger (16%)
 - i. From Vermont Public Radio (15%)
 - j. From the Washington World (10%)
 - k. From attending Board meetings (7%)
 - l. From CTVTV (6%)
 - m. People who indicated they 'Never' get information (2.5%)

Spending Questions:

Parents and Taxpayers were asked to rate the importance of specific initiatives or programs to the mission of the Barre schools by indicating whether the initiative or program is *Essential*, *Important*, *'Good to Have'*, or *Not Essential*. Respondents were also given the option of selecting 'No Opinion' on the question.

Areas of Spending / % of Taxpayers who feel the expenditures are:

Technology:

Essential to the mission	35%
Important to the mission	45%
Good to have	20%
Not Essential to the mission	2%

After School Programs

Essential	39%
Important'	45%
Good	25%
Not Essential	<1%

Enrichment Programs (e.g. Robotics, etc.)

Essential	37%
Important	49%
Good	13%
Not Essential	2%

Drug and Alcohol Education

Essential	49%
Important	36%
Good	14%
Not Essential	1.5%

Bullying and Harassment Education

Essential	52%
Important	37%
Good	14%
Not Essential	1.5%

Sexual Orientation Education

Essential	22%
Important	26%
Good	27%
Not Essential	23%
No Opinion	3%

Financial Literacy

Essential	52%
Important	37%
Good	11%
Not Essential	1.5%

Advanced Placement Classes (e.g. English, Biology, Calculus)

Essential	50%
Important	39%
Good	10%
Not Essential	1%

Athletic Teams

Essential	42%
Important	39%
Good	18%
Not Essential	3%

The Arts (e.g. band, drama, dance)

Essential	47%
Important	40%
Good	12%
Not Essential	2%

Summer School

Essential	15%
Important	44%
Good	32%
Not Essential	6%
No Opinion	4%

Alternative Education Programs

Essential	33%
Important	40%
Good	18%
Not Essential	4%
No Opinion	6%

Adult Ed Programs

Essential	11%
Important	26%
Good	42%
Not Essential	16%
No Opinion	7%

Remedial Programs

Essential	25%
Important	40%
Good	22%
Not Essential	5%
No Opinion	10%

Overall Satisfaction with Spending Question:

Taxpayers were asked to rate the Board's overall spending on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being "too low" and 5 being "too high." The survey altered the question to a Zero to 100 scale. When all of the responses were tallied, the Board received an average rating of "46" – indicating that on average, taxpayers feel their spending is just shy of being right where it should be.

Personal Questions:

The remainder of the survey asked Taxpayers to share their thoughts and opinions with the Board via a number of personal questions. The responses to those questions were voluminous and are available in a separate document. The questions taxpayers were invited to answer were:

1. If you seldom or never vote on school board elections or budgets, why don't you vote?
2. How can we improve how we communicate with you?
3. What are our greatest opportunities as a unified school district?
4. What final remarks would you like to share with us as we begin our work governing the Barre schools?