



School District of Jefferson
Spring 2024 Community Survey
Comment Analysis

This comment analysis report identifies the prevailing themes from comments gathered in the District’s community survey. A theme is identified when respondents reference similar suggestions, ideas, or concerns. These themes represent diverse opinions and may not align with each other.

Of the 884 total survey respondents, 364 participants (41%) left at least one comment.

Comment frequency:

- 174 respondents wrote one comment.
- 111 respondents wrote two comments.
- 49 respondents wrote three comments
- 24 respondents wrote four comments.
- 4 respondents wrote five comments.
- 2 respondents wrote six comments.

Pages

Spring 2024 Referendum	2
Overall Satisfaction	3
Planning Priorities	4
Graduate Success	5
School Experience (Parents Only)	6

Spring 2024 Referendum

Financial Concerns: Many respondents express concerns about the high tax burden, especially in light of recent tax increases and the impact of inflation on their personal finances. There is a feeling that the District should manage within its current budget without imposing additional financial strain on taxpayers. Particular concerns are raised about the tax impact on residents with fixed incomes.

Transparency: A number of comments highlight a perceived lack of transparency regarding how funds from the referendum would be used. Respondents express a desire for more detailed information and accountability from administrators and board members on spending and budget management.

Past Spending: Some believe the District is mismanaging funds, citing examples of what they consider wasteful spending on unnecessary projects, administrative overhead, and poor planning. There is a call for more prudent financial management and spending prioritization.

Educational Focus: Some comments focus on the quality of education, arguing that funds should be more directly allocated to improving academic outcomes, staff salaries, and classroom resources rather than extracurricular activities or infrastructure projects.

Referendum Fatigue: There is a sentiment of fatigue from regular referendums, with respondents feeling overwhelmed by repeated requests for additional funding. This is coupled with skepticism about the necessity and justification for each new referendum.

Alternative Funding: Respondents suggest that Jefferson should explore alternative solutions to financial challenges, such as cost-cutting measures, better budget management, and seeking funding sources other than property taxes.

Engagement: A lack of effective communication from the District is mentioned, with some respondents feeling that Jefferson leaders failed to adequately inform and involve the community in the referendum process.

Voting Hurdles: A few respondents mention logistical issues that prevented them from voting, such as being away from home, or a lack of awareness about the referendum due to insufficient outreach efforts.

Overall Satisfaction

Quality Education: Several respondents praise the District for providing a supportive, caring environment with high-quality educators, a focus on student safety, and a variety of extracurricular activity/club options. They highlighted Jefferson's ability to foster student connections and create a family-like atmosphere among staff and students.

Communication: A recurring theme is the District's perceived struggles to effectively communicate with parents, staff, and the broader community, especially regarding referendums, budget issues, and the impact of not passing referendums. Respondents express frustration over the lack of clarity, outreach, and proactive engagement strategies.

Budget Priorities: Many comments focus on concerns about financial management, including the allocation of funds/prioritization of spending and the impact of budget decisions on staff and programs. Respondents criticize the District for cutting teacher/support staff positions while maintaining or increasing administrators or perceived non-essentials.

Referendum Issues: Specific to referendums, there is confusion about their purposes, the projects they would fund, and their relation to Jefferson's overall budget. The timing and effectiveness of communication about referendums are also criticized, with suggestions for more community involvement and clearer explanations of the consequences of failing to pass them.

Staffing Impacts: Comments reflect concerns about the treatment of teachers and staff, including issues related to pay equity, job security, and the impact of budget cuts on morale and workload. There is a desire for more recognition of teacher experience and contributions, as well as concerns about the retention of high-quality staff.

Student Support: While many praise the District for its range of opportunities, there are calls for more support for students with special needs, more emphasis on gifted and talented programs, and concerns about discipline and accountability for student behavior.

Community Involvement: Respondents express a desire for greater community engagement and involvement in decision-making processes, suggesting that the District could do more to involve community members and improve public perception and support for the schools.

Planning Priorities

Career and College Readiness: Many respondents emphasize the importance of preparing students for various post-high school pathways, including college, technical education, and trades. There's a call for more internship opportunities, a wider range of courses, and additional information about post-high school paths for students.

Fiscal Responsibility: Several comments focus on the need for more disciplined budget management, efficient use of resources, and creative funding solutions without overburdening taxpayers.

Staff Retention: Maintaining high-quality staff and creating a positive culture and climate within Jefferson schools are highlighted as crucial for student success.

Student Behavior: Addressing student behavior and implementing consistent discipline policies are mentioned as areas needing attention.

Student Support Services: Respondents call for more support for students with special needs, including behavioral interventionists and more specialized teachers for students with differing abilities.

Mental Health: The importance of social-emotional learning opportunities for both staff and students is emphasized, along with the need for mental health services.

Core Academics: A focus on improving proficiency rates in reading, writing, and math is mentioned, along with the need for a curriculum that prepares students for higher education levels and builds real-life skills (such as basic financial literacy).

Future-Ready Skills: The integration of technology in education, including computer science and AI, is seen by some as essential for preparing students for future job markets.

Community Engagement: Improving communication with the community and engaging in more effective information dissemination about school initiatives and needs are seen as vital for gaining support for funding measures.

Student Activities: The value of sports, arts, clubs, and other extracurricular activities in developing well-rounded students is acknowledged.

Safety and Security: Ensuring the safety and security of students and staff within the school environment is mentioned as a priority.

Graduate Success

Practical Knowledge: Many respondents emphasize the importance of teaching students practical life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, financial literacy, home and auto maintenance, and understanding taxes and investments.

Mental Health: Several comments highlight the need for strong social-emotional learning, including emotional intelligence, resilience, empathy, and the ability to navigate social interactions and relationships. This theme suggests a belief that personal development and mental health are critical for success in life beyond academic achievements.

Professionalism: Respondents point out the necessity of developing a good work ethic in students, including punctuality, responsibility, communication skills, and the ability to follow through on tasks. There's a call for schools to prepare students for the workforce by helping instill these values and skills.

Technology Literacy: Some comments address the need for students to have a healthy relationship with technology, including concerns about the impact of cell phones on mental health and the importance of being able to evaluate sources for accuracy and bias. This reflects a broader concern about preparing students to navigate a digital world responsibly.

Civics: A number of respondents express the desire for students to have a better understanding of civics, democracy, and their roles as citizens. This includes understanding the political system, being informed voters, and being active, contributing members of their communities.

Academic Concerns: There are critiques of the current focus within school curricula, with some respondents arguing that too much emphasis is placed on standardized-tested subjects at the expense of broader educational goals.

Parental Responsibility: A recurring theme is the belief that many of the skills mentioned should be taught at home by parents, not just by schools. This reflects a viewpoint that education is a shared responsibility between schools and families, and that parents play a crucial role in their children's development.

Long-Term Future: Across many comments, there's a clear concern for preparing students not just for immediate post-high school life but for long-term success in an. This includes fostering lifelong learning, adaptability, and the ability to face and overcome challenges.

School Experience (Parents Only)

Staff Appreciation: Several respondents express gratitude and positive feedback for specific teachers or staff members who have made a significant positive impact on their or their children's school experience.

Special Education: Some comments highlight issues with the implementation of IEPs and the need for better support for students with special needs.

Communication: Parents express frustration over inconsistent communication from the schools, including the use of multiple platforms by teachers, which complicates tracking assignments and school activities.

Bullying and Discipline: There are concerns about bullying not being adequately addressed, as well as criticisms of the discipline system being inconsistent or unfair.

Curriculum: Respondents discuss the need for more challenging or diverse curriculum options beyond traditional subjects and the desire for more hands-on learning experiences.

Involvement: Some comments suggest interest in more opportunities for parental involvement in school activities and decision-making, as well as better support for parents in understanding their children's educational needs and progress.

Extracurricular Activities: Opinions vary on the availability and management of extracurricular activities and sports, with some praising the options available and others calling for a better focus on options outside of sports.

Financial Management: There are criticisms of how school funds are allocated, particularly regarding spending on sports versus other needs, and concerns about the financial challenges faced by staff, especially regarding benefits and compensation.