

## **SCARBOROUGH SCHOOL SURVEY, FEB-MAR 2025**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

The Scarborough School Survey was designed by the Scarborough SBAC Communications Committee in conjunction with Market Decisions Research. The survey was circulated from February 14 - March 3, 2025. Data was primarily collected through an online survey programmed by Market Decisions Research, with a paper survey option available as a secondary mode. A total of 1,290 surveys were completed. An additional 682 respondents partially completed the survey.

#### **KEY OUTCOMES**

The survey responses included a number of suggestions for alternate school building solutions. Harriman evaluated these concepts for feasibility and cost implications. One of the new ideas will be included in the SBAC vote on March 24, to choose which two options move forward for further consideration. Community opinions will factor into key decisions about facilities priorities and the selection of options to move forward to the next round of development.

#### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR FACILITIES PRIORITIES**

The community is primed to support needed upgrades to the schools' physical plants. However there is an opportunity to illustrate the infrastructure deficiencies in a compelling way, and to demonstrate how the proposed solution(s) will solve these problems. On Question 2, 80% of respondents said it was very important for school facilities to meet modern safety codes (rating of 8 or above on a scale of 1-10). Of note, only 38% reported a high level of concern about the "current physical condition of the schools" in Question 1 — however, when specific examples were cited, the perceived importance was higher.

**IMPLICATION: This indicates a clear opportunity to illustrate the existing deficiencies and explain how infrastructure concerns tie into overall safety and long-term school sustainability. A targeted communication strategy including photos and testimonials from staff can emphasize this.**

The highest-ranked educational priorities identify the need to modernize classrooms, meet student needs at every level, and provide adequate play space. Top priorities include:

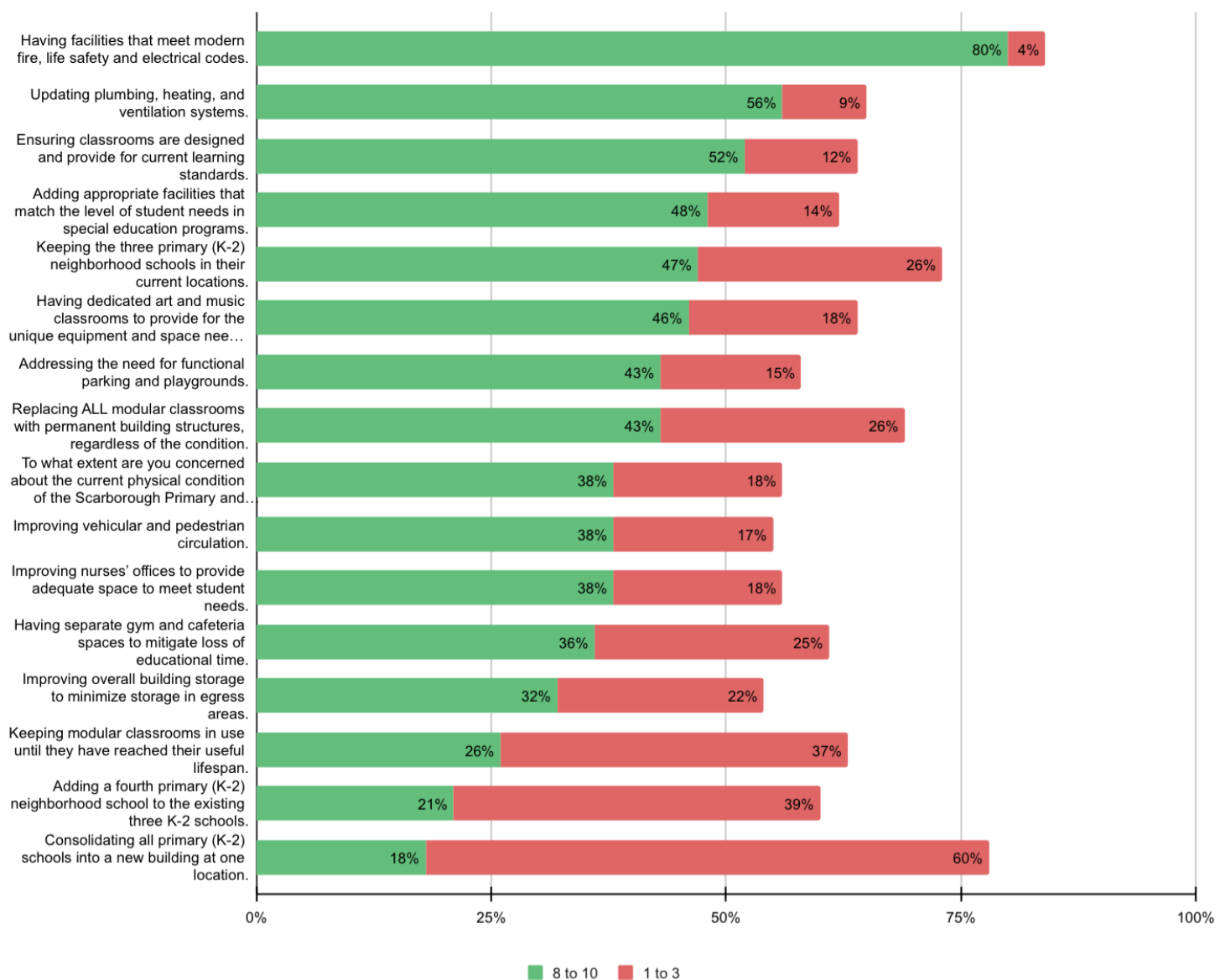
- Designing the learning environment to match current educational standards;
- Adding facilities to meet the needs of special education students;
- Maintaining functional playgrounds and parking;
- Replacing modular classrooms.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR FACILITIES PRIORITIES

Other desired upgrades, such as creating separate gym and cafeteria space, and enlarging nurses' offices, were relatively less well-received.

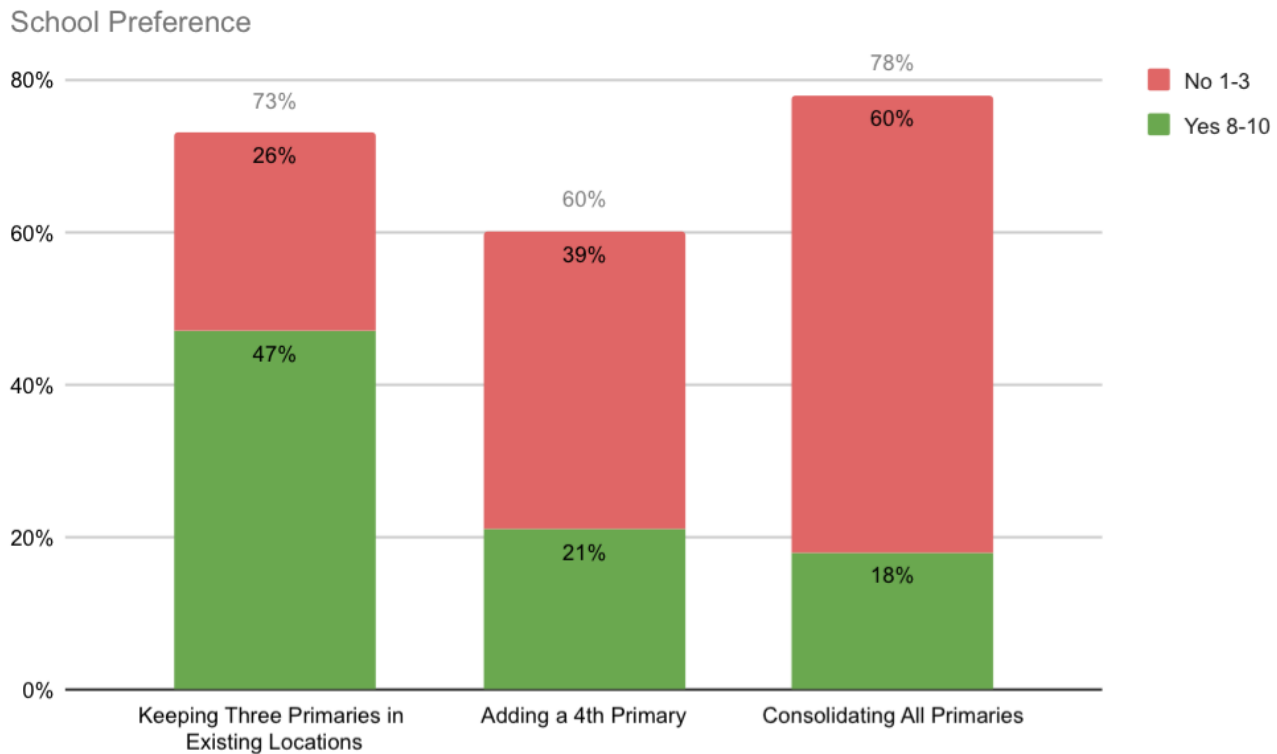
**IMPLICATION: This ranking provides guidance for the committee to prioritize tradeoffs — and/or help identify communication opportunities to bolster community support.**

Facilities Priorities. How important is...



## **SCHOOL PREFERENCE**

Overall there is stronger support for renovating the Neighborhood primary schools vs. building a new Consolidated primary school. This result confirms previous polling in both the November 2023 vote and the 2024 School Building survey. It is illustrated clearly in Question 2:

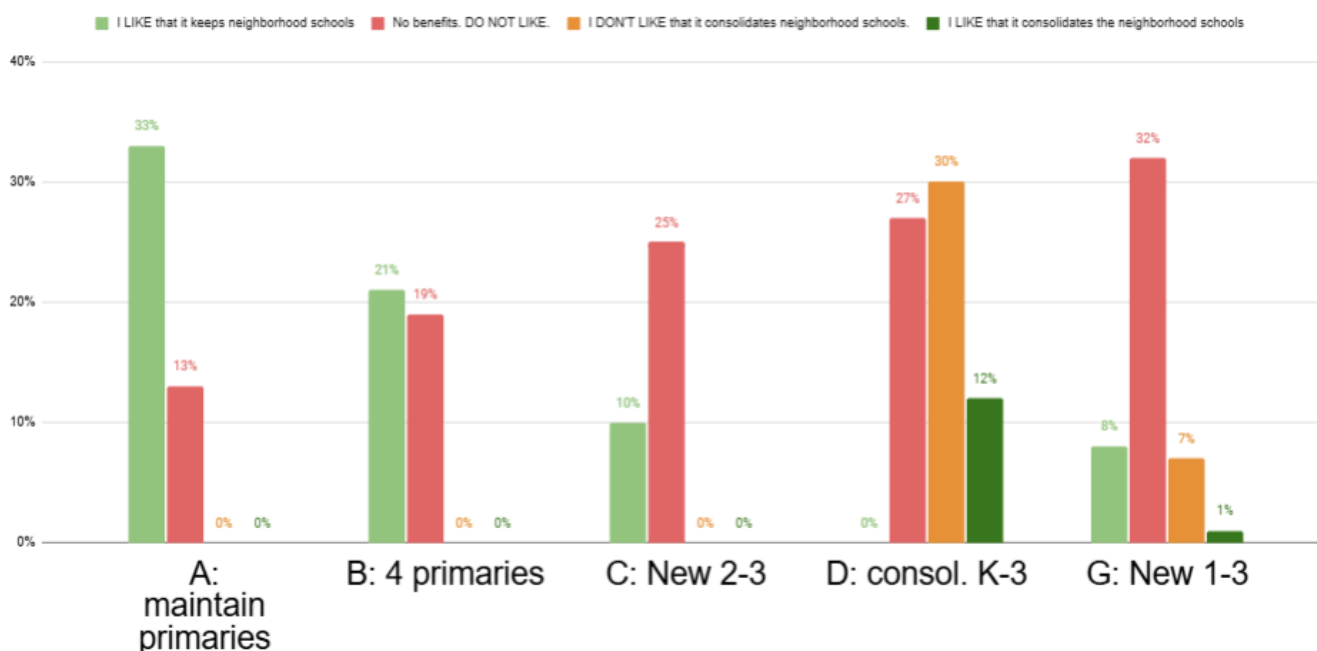


## **SCHOOL PREFERENCE**

The preference for Neighborhood Schools was further demonstrated in the individual feedback to the five options. Respondents submitted written responses to open-ended questions about the benefits, drawbacks and missing information for each option.

- When given the opportunity to review the individual options, the most common themes from respondents related to keeping or not keeping neighborhood schools. Across the options, Option A had the highest positive score by a notable margin, for “Keeps neighborhood schools” (33%).
- Conversely the consolidated options (C, D & G) received higher negative ratings for “No benefits. Do not like.” In addition, option D (New K-3) also received a notably high negative for “I don’t like that it consolidates Neighborhood schools” (30%).

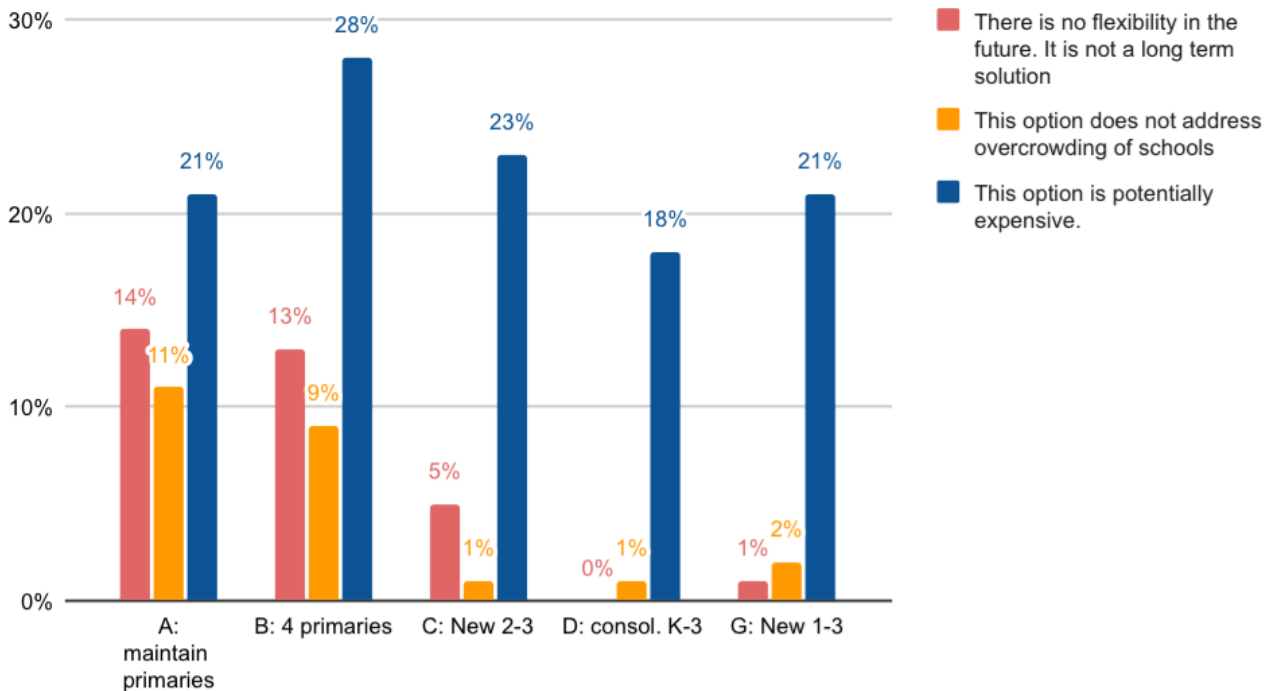
Top responses focus on Neighborhood schools vs. Consolidated schools



## **SCHOOL PREFERENCE**

However the Neighborhood options were flagged for lacking flexibility and the potential as a long-term solution, and respondents felt that they did not address overcrowding as well as options C, D and G. People were especially concerned about the cost of Option B.

Concern About Long Term Potential of Options A & B



### **IMPLICATIONS:**

- **Focus on developing at least one “Neighborhood” option to move to the next round.**  
Option A (Maintain the Primaries) continues to be the most popular concept, followed by Option B.
- **If the Committee chooses to continue to pursue a Consolidated school option, find ways to address citizen concerns and clearly articulate the advantages of a Consolidated option — such as long-term sustainability, improved student experience, better resource allocation, and long term operational cost savings.**  
Residents have expressed strong reservations about the Consolidated school concept dating back to the Nov 2023 referendum. Any conversation about a Consolidated school will need to address concerns about size, cost, transportation issues and the closing of Neighborhood schools.

## **“I DON’T KNOW” RESPONSES**

“I don’t know” and “I prefer not to answer” were consistent responses to each option across the board, ranging from 28% to 40% depending on the option. This suggests two outcomes from respondents: 1) perhaps people have not made up their minds and are therefore persuadable; or 2) people found the survey overwhelming and looked for the simplest answer to each question.

### **IMPLICATION:**

- **SBAC should put together a two-option packet (after SBAC vote to reduce to two options) that outlines benefits and deficiencies for each option. These should be directly supported by survey feedback for decision making transparency. The community forum presentation should draw from this packet to reduce the risk of misinformation spreading in the community.**

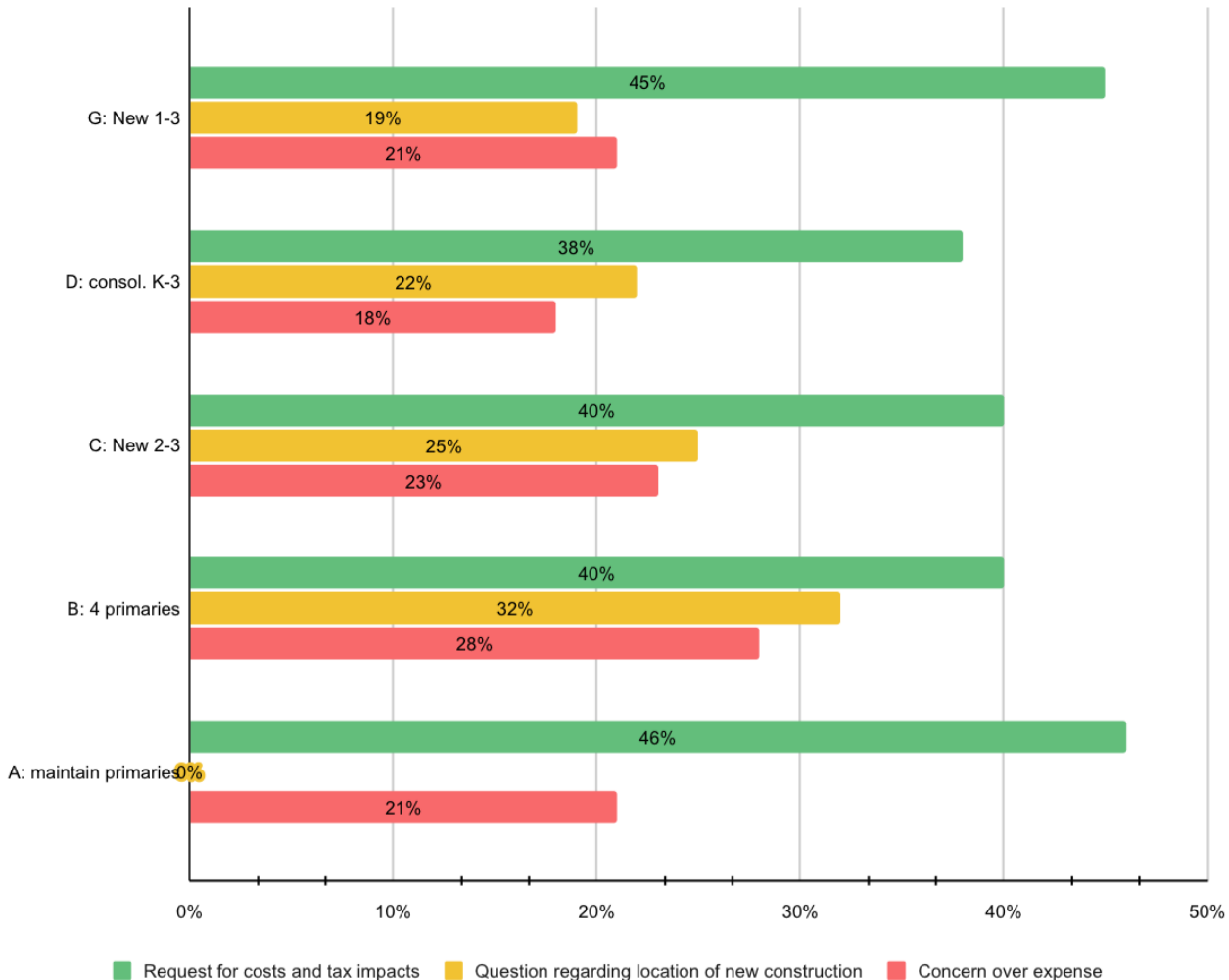
## **CONCERNS ABOUT COSTS AND LOCATIONS**

People are clear about their desire for more information about the cost and location of the options.

- “Project costs and tax impact” was the most-common Question for every option in the survey, ranging from 38% - 46% depending on the option. The second-most-asked question was regarding “possible location/sites” ranging from 19% - 32%.
- Cost concern was also noted as the top-ranked Drawback for most options, ranging from 18% - 28%. The only exception was Option D, for which the top drawback was “I don’t like that it consolidates neighborhood schools” (30%). For option D, cost concerns ranked #2.
- Cost was also the top concern identified under question 10 (“Are there additional features...that you would like to see?”) and question 11 (“Are there any other ideas you believe should be thoughtfully considered...?”)

## CONCERNS ABOUT COSTS AND LOCATIONS

Questions Focus on Cost and Location



### IMPLICATIONS:

- **Cost is a fundamental concern.** It is imperative to set and stick to a budget that feels reasonable to people. We must communicate the cost (or cost range) in a way that people find relatable and persuasive, while highlighting long-term savings and the negative implications of a “do nothing” strategy.
- In addition, communicate the location as soon as that information is available so that there are no surprises. **In the interim, communicate that the Downs is not under consideration for any new school construction.**

## **NEXT STEPS**

The SBAC will continue refining options based on community feedback and survey results. Key upcoming milestones include:

- March 24: The SBAC will vote to reduce the number of school building options to two.
- Two-Option Packet: Following the SBAC vote on March 24, a detailed comparison of the final two options will be developed and distributed on the SBAC website. This packet will include:
  - Benchmarking goals
  - Current cost estimates
  - A breakdown of key benefits and trade-offs
  - Insights informed by Survey #1 responses
- April (TBD): A community forum will be held to provide additional details and gather further feedback.

To stay informed throughout the process, visit [Scarborough Schools Building Project](#). This site includes updates, meeting schedules, and access to public documents.

Community members are encouraged to attend SBAC meetings in person or via Zoom. Additionally, you can submit questions directly to the committee through the website or sign up for email updates by scrolling down to “Featured News” and clicking the bell icon on the right side of the webpage.

### APPENDIX

|           |                                                                                                                             | MEAN | MEDIAN | YES<br>8 to 10 | NO<br>1 to 3 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Q1</b> | To what extent are you <b>concerned about the current physical condition</b> of the Scarborough Primary and Middle Schools? | 6.4  | 7      | 38%            | 18%          |

|            | How important to you is:                                                                                              | MEAN | MEDIAN | YES<br>8 to 10 | NO<br>1 to 3 |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Q2E</b> | Having facilities that meet <b>modern fire, life safety and electrical codes.</b>                                     | 8.8  | 10     | 80%            | 4%           |
| <b>Q2K</b> | <b>Updating plumbing, heating, and ventilation systems.</b>                                                           | 7.5  | 8      | 56%            | 9%           |
| <b>Q2G</b> | Ensuring classrooms are designed and provide for <b>current learning standards.</b>                                   | 7.2  | 8      | 52%            | 12%          |
| <b>Q2M</b> | Adding appropriate facilities that match the level of student needs in <b>special education programs.</b>             | 7.0  | 7      | 48%            | 14%          |
| <b>Q2A</b> | Keeping the three primary (K-2) neighborhood schools in their current locations.                                      | 6.4  | 7      | 47%            | 26%          |
| <b>Q2I</b> | Having <b>dedicated art and music classrooms</b> to provide for the unique equipment and space needs of each program. | 6.6  | 7      | 46%            | 18%          |
| <b>Q2D</b> | Addressing the need for <b>functional parking and playgrounds.</b>                                                    | 6.6  | 7      | 43%            | 15%          |
| <b>Q2N</b> | <b>Replacing ALL modular classrooms</b> with permanent building structures, regardless of the condition.              | 6.3  | 7      | 43%            | 26%          |
| <b>Q2F</b> | Improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation.                                                                       | 6.4  | 7      | 38%            | 17%          |
| <b>Q2L</b> | Improving nurses' offices to provide adequate space to meet student needs.                                            | 6.3  | 7      | 38%            | 18%          |
| <b>Q2H</b> | Having separate gym and cafeteria spaces to mitigate loss of educational time.                                        | 5.9  | 6      | 36%            | 25%          |
| <b>Q2J</b> | Improving overall building storage to minimize storage in egress areas.                                               | 5.9  | 6      | 32%            | 22%          |
| <b>Q2O</b> | Keeping modular classrooms in use until they have reached their useful lifespan.                                      | 4.9  | 5      | 26%            | 37%          |
| <b>Q2B</b> | Adding a fourth primary (K-2) neighborhood school to the existing three K-2 schools.                                  | 4.6  | 5      | 21%            | 39%          |
| <b>Q2C</b> | Consolidating all primary (K-2) schools into a new building at one location.                                          | 3.6  | 2      | 18%            | 60%          |

## SURVEY TABLES, QUESTIONS 5-9

### **BENEFITS. ALL OPTIONS**

What benefits do you see with this option?

|                                                                                          | Option A | Option B | Option C | Option D | Option G |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                                                                                          | %        | %        | %        | %        | %        |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the SBAC process                       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       | 0%       | 5%       |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the survey                             | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I like that it consolidates neighborhood schools                                         | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 12%      | 1%       |
| I like that it keeps neighborhood schools                                                | 33%      | 21%      | 10%      | 0%       | 8%       |
| I like that it preserves current grade levels                                            | 3%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I like that portables are removed                                                        | 3%       | 2%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       |
| I like that schools are safe and have necessary infrastructure                           | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       |
| I like that there are new school buildings                                               | 0%       | 7%       | 3%       | 9%       | 2%       |
| I like that there is no new construction, it utilizes existing structures                | 12%      | 4%       | 2%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I like the readjusted grade levels                                                       | 0%       | 0%       | 7%       | 5%       | 2%       |
| I like this option                                                                       | 2%       | 6%       | 7%       | 9%       | 5%       |
| I need cost info for this option                                                         | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       | 0%       |
| I see little to no benefits, I do not like this option                                   | 13%      | 19%      | 25%      | 27%      | 32%      |
| The location of new construction could be a benefit, what locations are being considered | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| There is adequate program and facility space                                             | 0%       | 1%       | 2%       | 2%       | 0%       |
| This option addresses overcrowding of schools, adds capacity                             | 1%       | 13%      | 11%      | 5%       | 7%       |
| This option addresses transportation issues                                              | 3%       | 2%       | 1%       | 2%       | 1%       |
| This option allows for flexibility in the future, it is a long term solution             | 0%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       | 4%       |
| This option is potentially inexpensive and financially kind to taxpayers                 | 9%       | 1%       | 1%       | 11%      | 1%       |
| This option is simple, there is minimal change                                           | 2%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       | 0%       |
| This option seems beneficial for teachers and staff                                      | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       |
| This option will keep class sizes small                                                  | 3%       | 3%       | 2%       | 0%       | 2%       |
| Other                                                                                    | 3%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I don't know                                                                             | 20%      | 21%      | 22%      | 19%      | 27%      |
| I prefer not to answer                                                                   | 11%      | 10%      | 11%      | 9%       | 13%      |
| Total                                                                                    | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     |

## DRAWBACKS. ALL OPTIONS

What drawbacks do you see with this option?

|                                                                                           | Option A | Option B | Option C | Option D | Option G |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                                                                                           | %        | %        | %        | %        | %        |
| I don't like that it consolidates neighborhood schools                                    | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 30%      | 7%       |
| I don't like that it keeps neighborhood schools                                           | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 5%       |
| I don't like that it readjusts grade levels                                               | 0%       | 0%       | 4%       | 8%       | 11%      |
| I don't like that it removes portables                                                    | 1%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I don't like that it requires new buildings and construction                              | 3%       | 4%       | 3%       | 2%       | 3%       |
| I don't like that this option still keeps old buildings                                   | 4%       | 2%       | 1%       | 0%       | 2%       |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the SBAC process                        | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       | 5%       | 6%       |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the survey                              | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I like this option, I do not see any drawbacks                                            | 8%       | 5%       | 3%       | 8%       | 1%       |
| I need cost info for this option                                                          | 1%       | 0%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       |
| I see little to no benefits, I do not like this option                                    | 3%       | 3%       | 7%       | 8%       | 11%      |
| The location of new construction could be an issue, what locations are being considered   | 1%       | 5%       | 4%       | 6%       | 3%       |
| The usage of now empty or underused schools is an issue                                   | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 4%       | 7%       |
| There is no room for flexibility in the future, it is not a long term solution            | 14%      | 13%      | 5%       | 0%       | 1%       |
| This option causes disruptions to education, increased or tough school transitions        | 5%       | 2%       | 17%      | 3%       | 8%       |
| This option does not address overcrowding of schools                                      | 11%      | 9%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| This option does not address/creates issues regarding transportation                      | 3%       | 4%       | 6%       | 10%      | 4%       |
| This option does not make schools safe and does not provide have necessary infrastructure | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 2%       | 1%       |
| This option is potentially expensive                                                      | 21%      | 28%      | 23%      | 18%      | 21%      |
| This option provides inadequate program and facility space                                | 7%       | 3%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| This option seems negative for teachers and staff, it might cause staffing issues         | 1%       | 2%       | 1%       | 0%       | 3%       |
| This option would cause inequality across facilities                                      | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| This option would increase class sizes                                                    | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 3%       | 1%       |
| Other                                                                                     | 3%       | 5%       | 3%       | 4%       | 3%       |
| I don't know                                                                              | 22%      | 21%      | 22%      | 16%      | 22%      |
| I prefer not to answer                                                                    | 11%      | 11%      | 12%      | 11%      | 12%      |
| Total                                                                                     | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     | 100%     |

## QUESTIONS, ALL OPTIONS

### What questions do you have about this option?

|                                                                                     | Option A | Option B | Option C | Option D | Option G |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                                                                                     | %        | %        | %        | %        | %        |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the SBAC process                  | 5%       | 3%       | 5%       | 12%      | 8%       |
| I have a general issue/comment/question regarding the survey                        | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about building new buildings                              | 3%       | 1%       | 0%       | 1%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about education disruptions                               | 5%       | 2%       | 3%       | 2%       | 1%       |
| I have a question/comment about enrollment                                          | 3%       | 4%       | 3%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I have a question/comment about future change/growth                                | 6%       | 3%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I have a question/comment about grade level changes                                 | 0%       | 1%       | 7%       | 1%       | 5%       |
| I have a question/comment about how teachers and staff feel                         | 1%       | 0%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       |
| I have a question/comment about possible location sites for new buildings           | 1%       | 32%      | 25%      | 22%      | 19%      |
| I have a question/comment about pre-K                                               | 3%       | 2%       | 3%       | 2%       | 8%       |
| I have a question/comment about programs or facility space                          | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       | 1%       | 1%       |
| I have a question/comment about project costs and tax impacts                       | 46%      | 40%      | 40%      | 38%      | 45%      |
| I have a question/comment about renovating and expanding existing buildings         | 14%      | 4%       | 4%       | 2%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about safety                                              | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about staffing                                            | 1%       | 3%       | 1%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I have a question/comment about the middle school                                   | 2%       | 2%       | 1%       | 3%       | 2%       |
| I have a question/comment about the need                                            | 0%       | 1%       | 3%       | 1%       | 2%       |
| I have a question/comment about the portables                                       | 3%       | 2%       | 2%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about the primary schools                                 | 5%       | 3%       | 1%       | 1%       | 1%       |
| I have a question/comment about the project time frame                              | 9%       | 3%       | 2%       | 1%       | 0%       |
| I have a question/comment about transportation, parking                             | 2%       | 3%       | 4%       | 5%       | 3%       |
| I have a question/comment about unused or underused buildings                       | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       | 12%      | 8%       |
| I have a question/comment about Wentworth                                           | 4%       | 3%       | 3%       | 4%       | 2%       |
| I like this option                                                                  | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       |
| I see little to no benefits, I do not like this option                              | 3%       | 2%       | 5%       | 6%       | 9%       |
| I support a specific solution, either one of the 5 provided or my own unique option | 1%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |
| Other                                                                               | 2%       | 2%       | 3%       | 3%       | 6%       |
| I don't know                                                                        | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 1%       |
| I prefer not to answer                                                              | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       | 0%       |