



**Tomah Area School District
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 1,798 total survey respondents, 558 participants (31%) left at least one comment.

Comment frequency:

- 340 respondents wrote one comment.
- 157 respondents wrote two comments.
- 61 respondents wrote three comments.

Topics

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Facility Challenges

Facility Conditions:

- Many comments express concerns about the poor condition of school buildings, including issues with heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and general maintenance.
- Some respondents question the accuracy of the facility condition ratings.
- There are concerns about the management of maintenance over the years.

Capacity Issues:

- Numerous comments highlight overcrowding in schools, particularly in special education programs and middle schools.
- There are also questions about the capacity data and how it is measured.

Reorganization:

- Several comments suggest consolidating schools to address capacity and maintenance issues.
- Some respondents propose specific reorganization plans, such as moving middle school students to the high school building and consolidating elementary schools.

Financial Concerns:

- Many comments express concerns about the tax impact of building new schools or renovating existing ones.
- Some respondents suggest more cost-effective solutions, such as better maintenance and using temporary mobile facilities.

Impact of Closing Schools:

- Several comments emphasize the community impact of closing schools, particularly the attachment to neighborhood schools and the importance of maintaining them.
- There are concerns about the impact of potential school closures on students' mental health.

Student Needs:

- Some comments focus on the need for better educational facilities to support academic and extracurricular activities (including sports and arts).
- There are also calls for focusing on curriculum and maintaining high-quality teaching rather than just building new facilities.

Communication:

- Several comments call for detailed information about the conditions of the buildings, the criteria for capacity, and the specific needs being addressed.
- Some respondents emphasize the need to regularly communicate the long-term plan of the District.

Reasons For Not Supporting Either Option

Tax Increase:

- Many respondents are worried about the increase in property taxes that would result from either option, especially for those with limited financial resources.
- There are concerns about the broader economic impact on the community, including increases in rent and the overall cost of living, which could drive people out of the area.

Maintaining/Improving Existing Facilities:

- Some respondents prefer improving and maintaining current school buildings rather than constructing new ones.

School Consolidation:

- There is apprehension about consolidating elementary schools into one larger building.
- Respondents worry about the impact on students, particularly younger children, and the potential loss of the close-knit community feel of smaller schools.

Enrollment Projections:

- Some respondents question the need for additional space, citing declining enrollment.

More Detailed Information:

- Many respondents request more details on the specific plans, costs, and impacts of each option, including the fate of existing buildings and programs.

Focus on Academic Improvement:

- Several comments suggest that the focus should be on improving academic performance and addressing behavioral issues rather than on building new facilities.

Alternative Funding:

- Some respondents suggest exploring alternative funding sources, such as grants, state and federal funding, or private donations.

Option 2 Over Option 1:

- Among those who express a preference, there is a notable inclination towards Option 2, as it is seen as a more long-term solution.

School Administration:

- Some comments criticize the District's spending practices, suggesting that better financial management and prioritization of funds are needed.

Impact on Programs:

- There are concerns about how the proposed changes would affect special education programs, Montessori programs, and other specialized educational services.

Additional New High School Projects

Financial Concerns:

- Many respondents express concerns about the cost of building and maintaining new facilities, particularly the swimming pool and athletic fields.
- Some suggest that the community cannot afford these expenses, given the current economic climate.

Prioritization of Education:

- Respondents suggest funds should be prioritized for academic improvements rather than athletic facilities.
- Several comments emphasize the need to focus on core subjects like reading, math, and science.

Community Use:

- There is interest in ensuring that any new facilities, particularly the swimming pool, are accessible to the public and not just the school.
- Some suggest partnerships with the city or other organizations to share costs and benefits.
- Specific suggestions include ensuring the pool is used for swim lessons and community health programs.

Long-Term Planning:

- Some respondents argue that investing in new facilities now will save money in the long run and provide long-term benefits to the community.
- There is a call for comprehensive planning to ensure that any new construction meets future needs and avoids the need for further renovations or expansions.

Wide Programming:

- Comments highlight the need for facilities for all sports and for both boys and girls.
- There is also a call for facilities that support a wide range of activities, not just traditional sports.

Apprehension:

- Some respondents express distrust in the District's financial management and transparency.
- There are concerns about the accuracy of cost estimates and the potential for hidden expenses.

Alternative Solutions:

- Suggestions include using existing facilities more effectively, partnering with nearby institutions like Fort McCoy, and seeking philanthropic donations.
- Some propose focusing on renovating and maintaining current buildings rather than constructing new ones.

Impact on Community:

- Some comments highlight the potential for new facilities to attract families and businesses to the area, improving the overall community.
- There is a belief that modern facilities can enhance the reputation and competitiveness of the District.