

ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
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# Board of Education Study Session Survey

Community Input Summary · May 13, 2026

538

Total Responses

522

Q3 "Priorities" Responses

494

Q8 "Essential Aspects" Responses

**Priority Comments** — responses to Q3: "What priorities should the district consider as it aligns the budget around supporting all students equitably, compensating staff competitively, and ensuring financial stability?" **Essential Aspects** — responses to Q8: "What aspects of the AAPS experience are most essential to you?"

# Executive Summary

## Quantitative Findings from 538 Respondents



### Teacher Pay is #1 Priority

318 of 522 respondents (61%) cited teacher compensation as the top budget priority — confirmed as the dominant theme.



### Broad Support for Land Sales

220 respondents support selling unused land (41%), only 16 opposed. Seen as 'low-hanging fruit' with minimal community impact — preferred first step.



### Conditional Support for Buildings

214 support, 244 conditional/unsure — broadly acceptable if focused on unused or administrative properties, not active school buildings.



### Closure: Significant Opposition

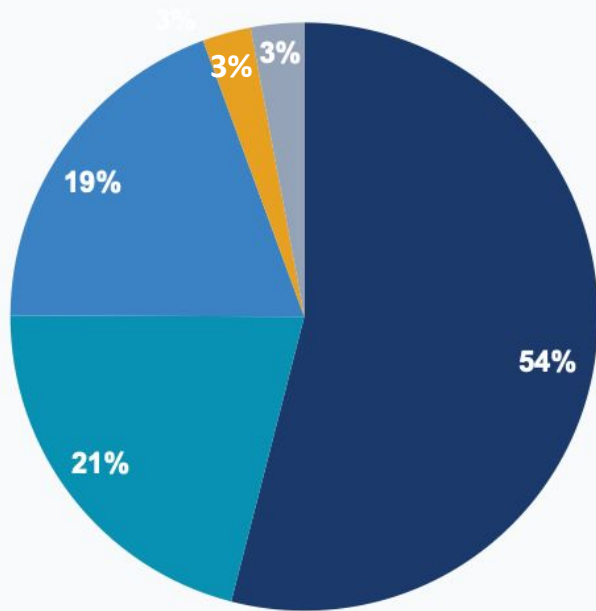
Opposition (82) nearly matches support (91), with 330 conditional. Qualitative data shows community identity is tied to neighborhood schools.

**7 Qualitative Themes** from Q8 responses are detailed in slides 9–15: Teachers & Pay · Class Sizes · Specials & Arts · Technology · Neighborhood Schools · Admin Transparency · Safety & Equity

# Who Responded?

Respondents could select multiple roles · 538 total submissions · 162 multi-role respondents

Survey Q1: "I am a/an: Check all that apply" — respondents could select Parent/Caregiver, AAPS Staff Member, Community Member, AAPS Student, and/or Other



■ Parent/Caregiver ■ Community Member ■ AAPS Staff  
■ AAPS Student ■ Other

## Response Breakdown

### Parent / Caregiver

54% (405)

### Community Member

21% (158)

### AAPS Staff Member

19% (145)

### Other

3% (22)

### AAPS Student

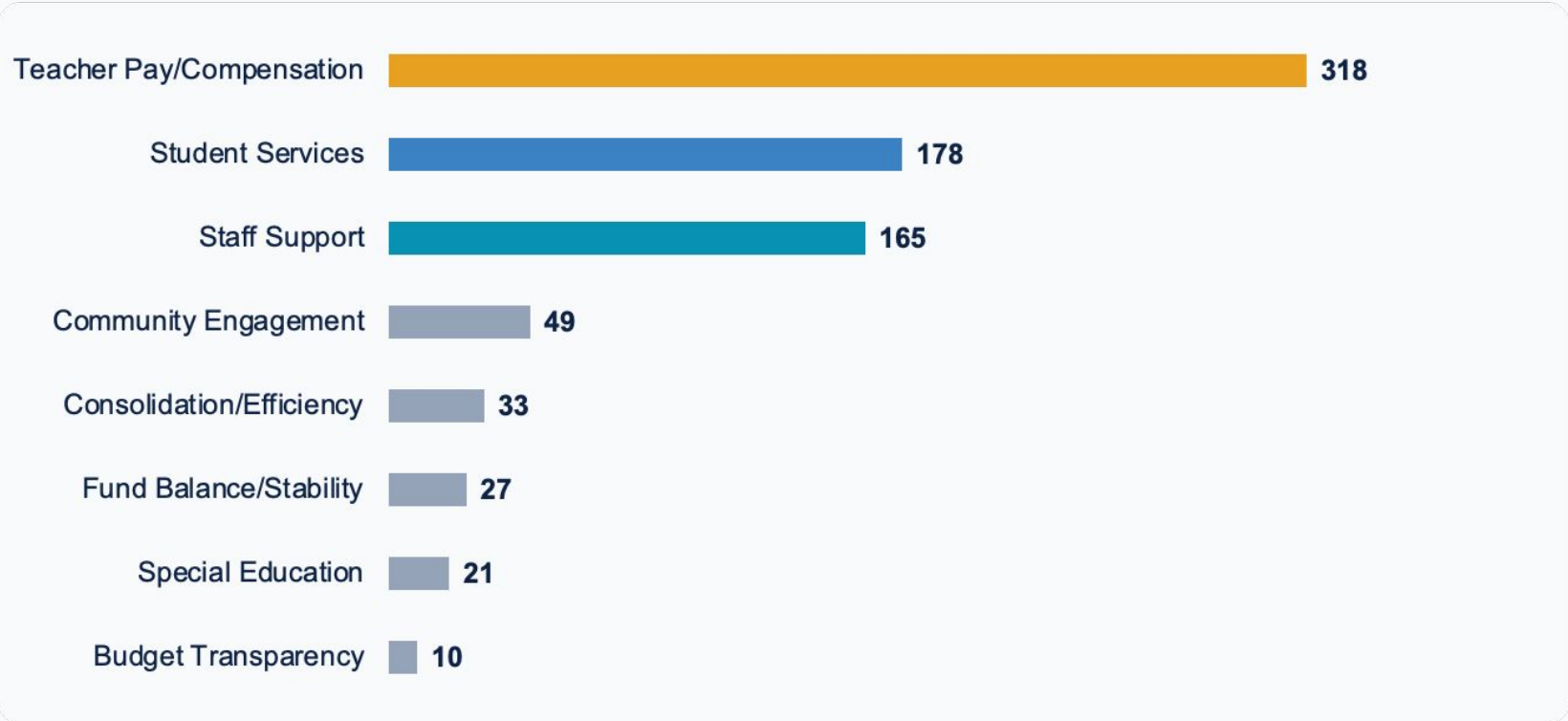
3% (20)

\* % of total responses; multi-select enabled

# Budget Priorities: What the Community Said

Keyword frequency analysis of 522 open-text priority responses

Survey Q3: "As AAPS works to align our budget around the goals of supporting all students equitably, compensating staff competitively, and ensuring the short- and long-term financial stability of the district, what priorities should the district consider?"



# Community Views: Revenue & Savings Options

Three budget strategies were presented to respondents for open-text feedback

Survey Q4: "Selling unused land..." | Q5: "Selling unused and/or current buildings..." | Q6: "School closure and/or consolidation (closing and consolidating schools for annual savings to the general fund)"

## Support

Respondent explicitly agreed or expressed clear approval

## Conditional / Unsure

Respondent agreed with conditions, asked questions, or expressed uncertainty

## Oppose

Respondent explicitly disagreed or expressed clear opposition

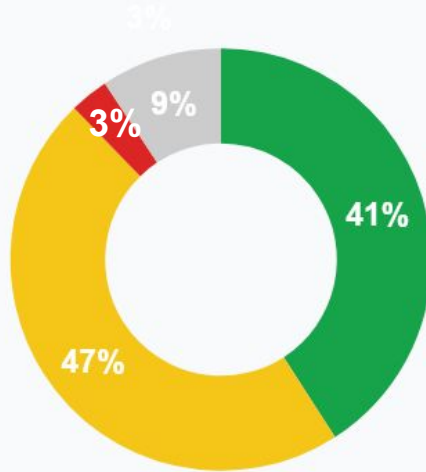


💡 Land sales are most supported (41%); school consolidation sees opposition (82) near-equal to support (91), with 330 respondents conditional — requiring transparent, community-led planning.

# Property Strategies: Land & Building Sales

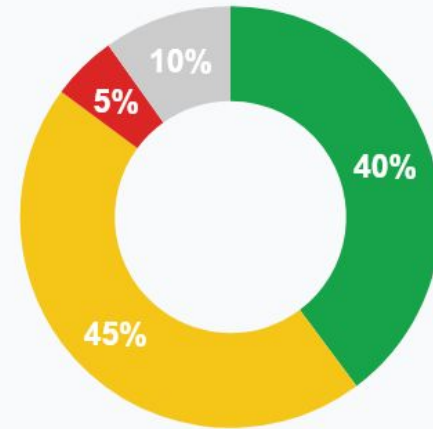
Survey Q4: "Selling unused land (sale of vacant AAPS property for one-time revenue that would go to the general fund)" | Q5: "Selling unused and/or current buildings (sale of AAPS buildings, such as administrative buildings or schools, for one-time net profit to the general fund after bond payback)"

## Selling Unused Land



Support Conditional/Unsure Oppose No Response

## Selling Unused/Current Buildings

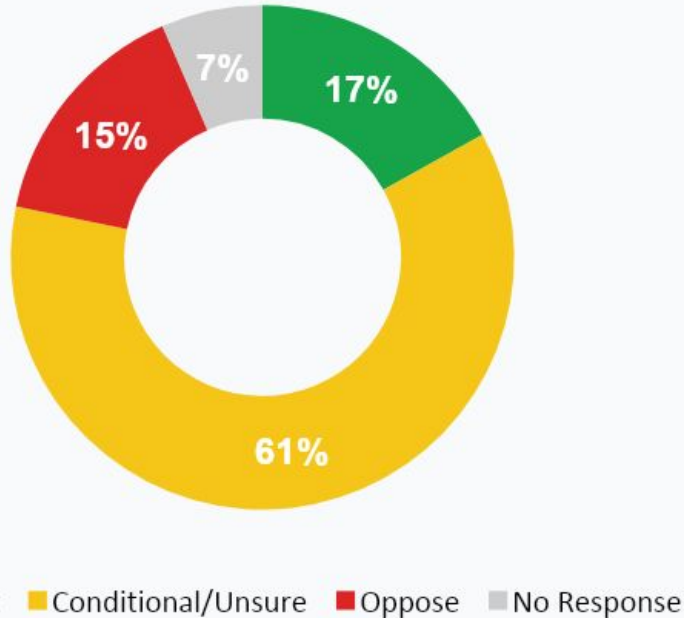


Support Conditional/Unsure Oppose No Response

# School Closure & Consolidation

The most nuanced and contested option

Survey Q6: "School closure and/or consolidation (closing and consolidating schools for annual savings to the general fund)"



## What conditions matter most to respondents:



Community engagement process



Preserve neighborhood school accessibility



Concerns about equitable impact on diverse communities

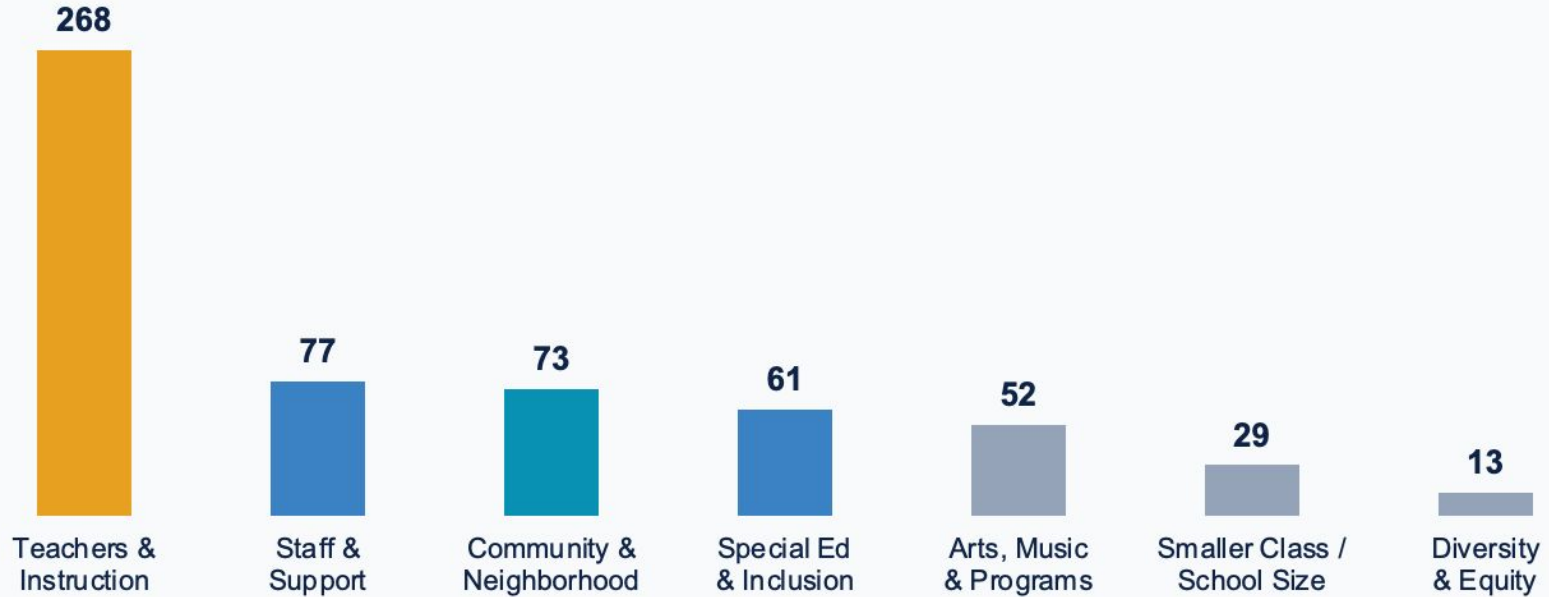


Fears it will drive families out of the district

# What Is Most Essential to Our Community?

494 respondents described what matters most about the AAPS experience

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the AAPS experience are most essential to you?" | See backup slide for detailed breakdown of "Smaller Class/School Size" responses



*"My kids' teachers and our school. I love it. It's small, in my community, and the teachers are exceptional." — Parent/Caregiver*

# 7 Themes: What the Community Values Most

Qualitative analysis of 494 open-text responses to Q8

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?" | Seven themes compiled from qualitative analysis of 494 open-text responses.

1	Teacher quality, compensation, and retention	<b>DOMINANT</b>
2	Small class sizes and manageable teacher-to-student ratios	<b>VERY HIGH</b>
3	Specials, arts, music, and enrichment programs	<b>VERY HIGH</b>
4	Reduced screen time and skepticism about technology	<b>HIGH</b>
5	Neighborhood schools and community connection	<b>HIGH</b>
6	Transparency and accountability	<b>HIGH</b>
7	Student safety, equity, and support for special populations	<b>MODERATE-HIGH</b>

Signal Strength:

**DOMINANT**

Vast majority of responses

**VERY HIGH**

Large proportion of responses

**HIGH**

Frequent across groups

**MODERATE-HIGH**

Notable across multiple groups

# Key Observations Across Themes

Signal patterns that cut across all 7 individual themes

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?" | Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

## Themes 1, 2, 4 & 6 are one financial argument

Respondents frequently argued that money spent on technology, administrative salaries, and outside contracts should instead go to teacher pay and smaller class sizes, showing some misunderstanding of funding streams and the proportional impact of some categories on the budget.

## Theme 4 (technology skepticism) is consistent across the community

Screen-time skepticism was notably consistent — which suggests strong cross-community agreement.

## Theme 5 (neighborhood schools) carries disproportionate emotional weight

Though the frequency is lower than Themes 1–3, families describing their neighborhood schools used language of “belonging” and “identity” - indicating strong ties to their school community.

## Teachers are the throughline in every theme

Even respondents who led with something else — arts programs, class sizes, technology — almost always circled back to teachers as the root issue.

## 1

# Teacher Quality, Compensation & Retention

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?" | Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

► **DOMINANT** — Present in the vast majority of responses

Competitive pay

Fair benefits

Morale & working conditions

Teacher as top priority

Respondents across all roles named teachers as an essential element of AAPS. Most connected teacher quality directly to compensation, describing concerns that underpaid and demoralized teachers will leave for neighboring districts.

“ Place a high value on quality teachers and support staff, positive school morale, and extra experiences (for students).

“ Break down the whole budget, pay the teachers, and rebuild everything else around it.

“ Happy teachers = happy students.

## 2

# Small Class Sizes & Manageable Teacher-to-Student Ratios

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"  
Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

▶ VERY HIGH FREQUENCY — Closely linked to Theme 1

Individualized attention

Teacher workload

Special education support

Class size

Respondents consistently named small class sizes as an important factor in a quality education.

“  
*The most important things we need are teachers, adequate class sizes (PLUS high-need support) and safe buildings.*

“  
*When the class sizes get too big, they are no longer able to teach students to their level.*

## 3

## Specials, Arts, Music & Enrichment Programs

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"  
Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

▶ **VERY HIGH FREQUENCY** — Strong emotional investment across grade levels

Art and music

PE and library

Languages

PLTW and CTE

Extracurriculars and athletics

Respondents opposed cuts to specials — art, music, PE, library, and world languages — framing them as essential to equity, student engagement, and the district's identity.

“  
*Specials are essential to students educational experience.*

“  
*Specials teachers are very important to kids' learning*

## 4

# Reduced Screen Time & Skepticism About Technology in Classrooms

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"  
Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

► HIGH FREQUENCY — Especially strong among elementary parents

Limit 1:1 devices

No AI in class

Hands-on learning

Pen to paper

A consistent theme, especially from parents of younger children. Many respondents cited current research on screen time harms. Several explicitly connected tech spending to lack of competitive teacher compensation, indicating some misunderstanding of funding streams.

“ Retaining great teachers, safe buildings, a great education with minimal screen time.

“ Safe and intentional use of screen time (ideally reducing), fun and collaborative learning environments that foster lifelong learning.

“ My kindergartener tells me she watches TV all day.

## 5

## Neighborhood Schools & Community Connection

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"

Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

▶ HIGH FREQUENCY — Tied to belonging, identity, and fear of consolidation

Walkability

School community feel

Small school size

Fear of consolidation

Title I school culture

Many respondents — particularly elementary families — valued the sense of community their neighborhood school provides and expressed fear about consolidation. Several described schools where principals know every student's name, where families coordinate together, and where walkability creates neighborhood bonds. Title I school families were especially vocal about the culture their schools have built.

“

*If our school is closed, this will result in a loss of community .*

“

*Our principal knows every student's name by the second week of school.*

“

*School consolidation may be inevitable. If there is a way to do it without increasing overall class size and laying off teachers.*

## 6

## Transparency & Accountability

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"  
Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

▶ HIGH FREQUENCY — Often expressed with frustration or anger

Administrative bloat

Budget mismanagement

Perceived lack of transparency

Administrative and Board accountability

Respondents expressed historical budget mismanagement and lack of budget transparency, and perceived administrative bloat.

“  
*Financial transparency should be a top priority. It is hard to have open and honest conversations about the budget if we are all looking at different numbers.*

“  
*Cut admins!*

“  
*AAPS has failed for decades to show care for its teachers through competitive salaries.*

## 7

# Student Safety, Equity & Support for Special Populations

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"  
Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

► MODERATE-HIGH FREQUENCY — Raised across grade levels and school types

Physical safety

IEP & special education support

Student behavior & discipline

Mental health

Equity across schools

Respondents raised safety concerns ranging from physical building conditions to the need for consistent behavioral consequences. Parents of students with IEPs described inconsistent special education support. Equity across Title I and non-Title I schools was also raised. Mental health support and social-emotional learning appeared across grade levels.

“ *Equitable programming and funding to Title 1 schools!* ”

“ *Safety, equity-every student should have the resources to thrive.* ”

“ *Focus spending on equitable resources and opportunities for all students across the district.* ”

# Voices by Stakeholder Group

Analysis draws on all open-text responses (Q2–Q8). Respondents selected their role(s) in Q1 and could check multiple categories; group counts reflect all respondents who identified with each role.

## Parents / Caregivers

405 respondents

- Strongest voices for teacher pay increases
- Value neighborhood schools & small class sizes
- Support land/building sales as first steps
- Divided but open to consolidation with community engagement
- Concerned about transparency in financial decisions

## Community Members

158 respondents

- Emphasize long-term fiscal sustainability
- Support property sales as practical first steps
- Value financial transparency
- Support AAPS as anchor of community identity
- Want clear, data-driven closure criteria if pursued

## AAPS Staff

145 respondents

- Urgently seek competitive compensation
- Highlight impact of underfunding on services
- Fear school closure will disrupt classroom communities
- Call for accountability on historical pattern of financial mismanagement
- Want district budgeting to proactively plan for competitive teacher compensation

## Students & Other

42 respondents

- Value school community & belonging deeply
- Worried about losing their specific school
- Support teacher pay — appreciate great educators
- Want programs (arts, sports, specials) protected
- Cautious about school consolidations



# Themes & Considerations

Summary slide synthesizing open-text responses across Q2–Q8 from 538 total respondents. Percentages calculated from respondents who provided answers to each applicable question. Seven action areas drawn from both quantitative survey results and qualitative theme analysis

01

## Prioritize Teacher Compensation

Themes 1 & 6: 61% of respondents named this #1.

02

## Protect Class Sizes

Theme 2: Increasing class sizes is opposed across grade levels.

03

## Safeguard Specials, Arts, and Enrichment Programs

Theme 3: Cuts to specials were described as an equity issue — families who cannot pay for private lessons depend on school access.

04

## Audit Technology Spending — Redirect to Teachers

Theme 4: Respondents across demographic lines called for rolling back 1:1 devices and cutting digital subscriptions— and the savings should go to teacher pay.

05

## Pursue Property Sales Before Any School Closures

Land and building sales are the community-preferred first steps. Consolidation/closure is deeply tied to neighborhood identity.

06

## Rebuild Trust Through Transparency

Theme 6: Trust has eroded significantly since COVID. The Board must proactively publish fund balance data and decision rationale.

07

## Ensure Safety, Equity, and Special Education Support

Theme 7: Physical safety, IEP support, and equitable resourcing across Title I and non-Title I schools were raised across grade levels.

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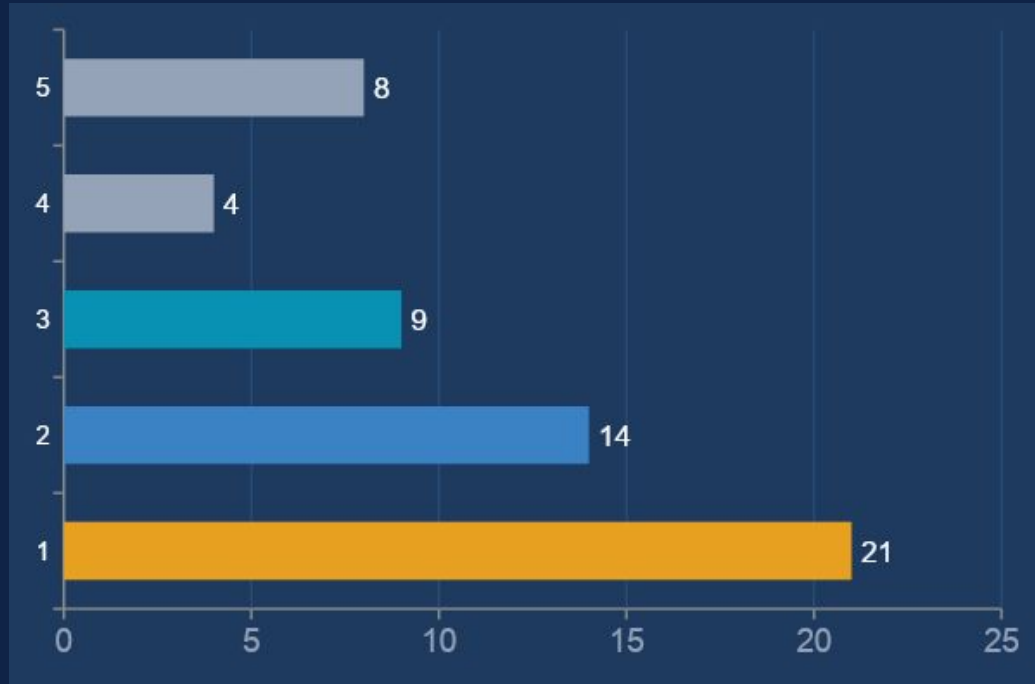
**Thank You to All Who Shared  
Your Voice**

# "Smaller School Size": What Respondents Actually Mean

Survey Q8: "What aspects of the Ann Arbor Public Schools experience are most essential to you?"

Qualitative theme analysis from 494 open-text responses.

29 respondents cited school/class size as essential — nearly all referring to class sizes and teacher-student ratios, not building size



## Representative Respondent Voices

“ Small class sizes. 36 students in an algebra class is insane, as is 25 in kindergarten.

“ Small, manageable classroom sizes and adequate support staff, so teachers have the ability to focus on what they need to: teaching our kids.

“ Maintaining Community High Schools and other small public high school options. We came back to AAPS after leaving for private because of Community.

“ Staff to student ratio that favors smaller class sizes. Consistent specials schedules and dedicated nurses, social workers, and APs at each building.

**💡 Board implication:** Respondents are not primarily asking for smaller school buildings — they want class sizes that allow teachers to know and support every student individually. This distinction matters for any consolidation or facilities planning.