Polling and Potential MLO Feedback

April 7, 2026 Board Presentation



Agenda

- Introduction
- March Polling Results - Todd Vitale
- Committee Feedback on a Potential 2026 MLO
- Next Steps



Creating a Sustainable Funding Plan for Facilities and Operations

Douglas County School District
Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow



BOE ENDS

Global Ends

All students will develop the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and dispositions needed to achieve their highest individual potential in a safe, accessible, thriving, and welcoming learning environment. These results shall be produced at a cost that demonstrates good stewardship of resources.



Ends-1 Academic Excellence and Life Skills

1. Students have the knowledge and skills appropriate to their age and learning ability, to qualify for higher levels of learning, employment of their choice, or independent living.

1.1. Students graduate with cognitive skills, digital skills, and civic responsibility, to each student's individual potential.

1.2. Students graduate with workforce readiness skills.

1.3. Students graduate with independent learning skills.



Ends-2 Mindsets and Dispositions

1. Students acquire the necessary self-leadership skills and interpersonal skills that enable them to become responsible and engaged members of society.

1.1. Students develop their individual strengths, to support their social, emotional, and physical well-being.

1.2. Students graduate as responsible and engaged members of society, contributing positively within their individual ability and interests.

DCSD STRATEGIC PLAN

Douglas County School District
Leading the Way

PURPOSE

By 2038, all DCSD graduates will be empowered to meet their future with competence, purpose, and optimism.

END STATEMENT

All students will develop the knowledge, skills, mindsets and dispositions needed to achieve their highest individual potential in a safe, accessible, thriving, and welcoming learning environment.

FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENT

Cultivate a culture and climate that strives for excellence and promotes hope and resiliency.

CORNERSTONE COMMITMENTS



Academic Excellence



Strategic Technology Integration



Essential Mindsets and Dispositions



Future Ready Graduates (post-secondary readiness and life skills)



Thriving Schools and Thriving Communities

Need for a Long-Term Sustainable Funding Plan

New **Board of Education Ends** were established in Fall 2024 (with public engagement and input)

Strategic Plan Framework established in Fall 2025 to meet the Ends (with public engagement and input)

Master Capital Plan (MCP)

- The MCP lays out what investments should be made into the district's capital assets (buildings, etc.) and into new construction; capital improvements in existing assets are captured for 1-5 years and new construction needs are captured for 1-5 years and 6-10 years.
- Historically, staff and the Long Range Planning Committee prepare the Master Capital Plan.
- The Board approves the MCP annually (the 2025-2026 MCP was approved June 2025)

We have to have a Financial Plan to meet the needs of our district as expressed by our community and to properly maintain and develop our capital infrastructure.

Sustainable Funding Plan Timeline



MLO to fund the Ends/Strategic Plan ($40-50M)

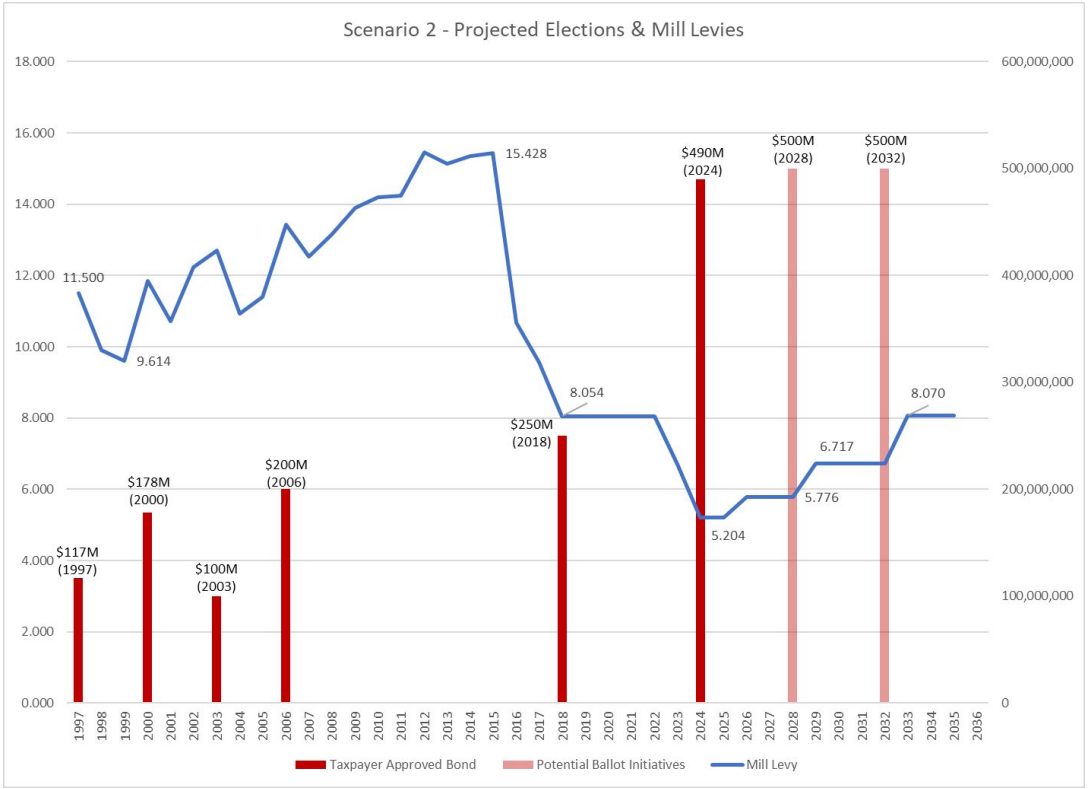
Bond to fund MCP needs through 2030 ($500M)

MLO for facility maintenance ($40M)

Bond to fund MCP needs (non-maintenance) through 2035 ($500M)

Bond to fund MCP needs (non-maintenance) through 2040 (TBD)

Scenario 2: Fund CIP Through a Future MLO



Overview of School Taxes

- Local Share of School Finance Act (SFA) Total Program Funding: 27.000
- DCSD Mill Levy Overrides as approved by voters
  - 6 separate authorizations in 1989, 1997, 2003, 2006, 2018 and 2023
  - **All are Fixed Dollar Amounts**
  - Current authorizations total $139M
  - Statutorily cap is 25% or 28% of our SFA funding ($169 or $189M* in FY26)
- Bond Redemption as allowed by statute to fund debt service on the District's voter approved General Obligation Bonds

** depends on if the new SFA is implemented (28%) or paused (may revert to 25%)*

DCSD Mill Rate History

Type of Levy	2025-2026 Levy	2024-2025 Levy	2023-2024 Levy
School Finance Act per HB20-1418	27.000	27.000	27.000
Total Mill Levy Overrides	12.293	13.210	13.485
Abatement	0.459	0.1140	0.245
Bond Redemption	5.776	5.204	5.204
Total Levy	**45.528**	**45.528**	**45.934**

Staff Recommendation for a Possible 2026 MLO

- Additional SRO
- Annual Curricular Investment
- Career & Technical Education (CTE) Operations
- Compensation
- Personal Financial Literacy and Life Skills Programming
- Specialized Programming for Students with Special Educational Needs
- Student Programming (Specials)
- AI and Digital Literacy Programming

Tax Impact of a Potential 2026 MLO

- The District is currently authorized to collect $139,713,000 of override revenues.
- County's current assessed value $11,365,206,387

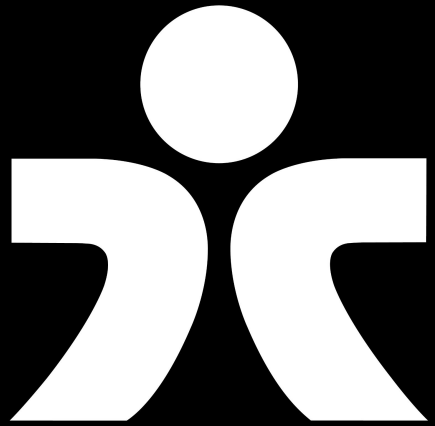
	25% Override Limit	28% Override Limit
FY 2026 Total Program Funding	675,575,680	675,575,680
Override Limit	168,893,920	189,161,190
Remaining Capacity	29,180,920	49,448,190
Mills Needed based on 2025 Assessed Value	2.58	4.45
Annual Tax Increase per $100,000 of Actual Residential Value	$ 18.19	$ 31.37
Per Average home of $750,000	$ 136.42	$ 235.29



Polling Results

Douglas County School District
Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow





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N=505 Likely Voters (MoE=4.4%)
March 4-8, 2026



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Political Environment

District Direction

5. Thinking about the direction the Douglas County school district is headed today, do you believe things are going in the right direction or would you say things have gotten off on the wrong track?

	2026	2024
Right Direction	43%	37%
Wrong Track	40%	38%
Unsure/Refused	17%	26%

2026	Size	Right Direction	Wrong Track
OVERALL	100%	43%	40%
PARTY: Republican	34%	36%	47%
PARTY: Independent	48%	45%	40%
PARTY: Democrat	17%	52%	25%

2023 - Asked About Favorability of DCSD vs. Right Track/Wrong Track

- Very Favorable - 13%
- Somewhat Favorable - 41%
- Somewhat Unfavorable - 25%
- Very Unfavorable - 15%
- Unsure/Refused - 6%

2022 – This question not asked



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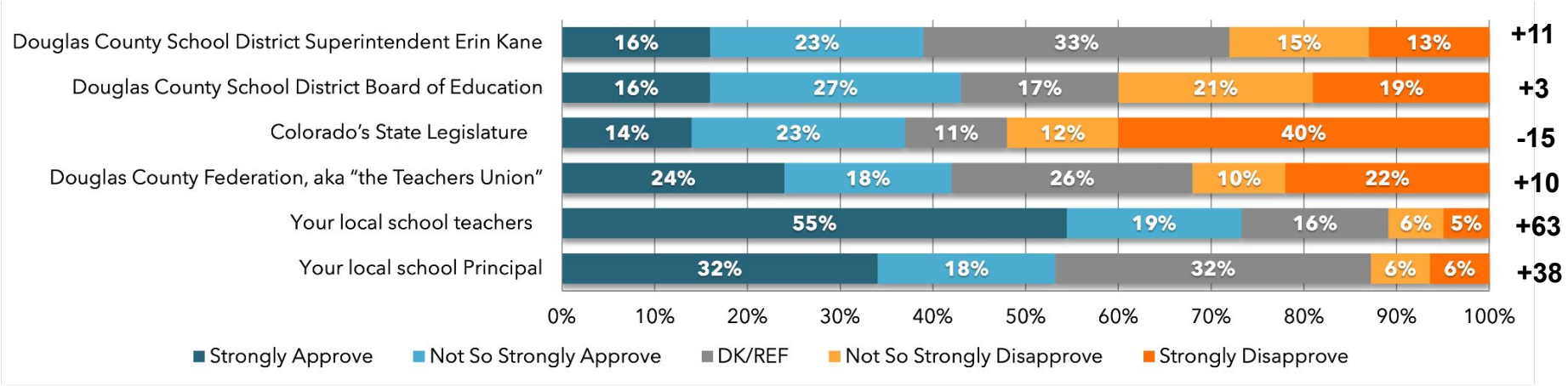
Job Approve

Job Approvals



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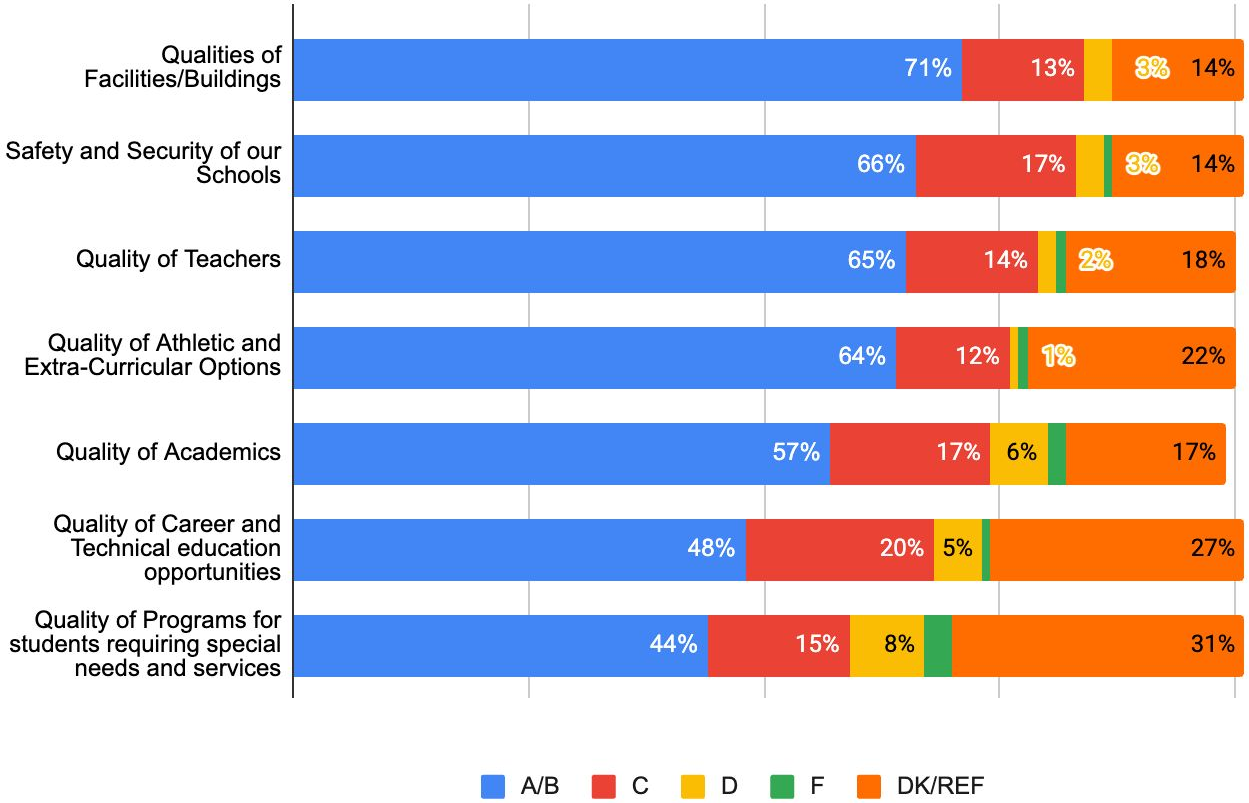
Douglas County School District Grades

School District Performance

4. Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D or Fail -- to rate the quality of their work at school. Suppose Douglas County School District was graded the same way, what grade would you give Douglas County School District?

	2026	2024	2023	2022
A/B	**54%**	45%	41%	45%
C	**25%**	23%	31%	36%
D/F	**9%**	11%	18%	18%
Unsure/Refused	**11%**	22%	10%	0%

Douglas Schools - Attribute Grades





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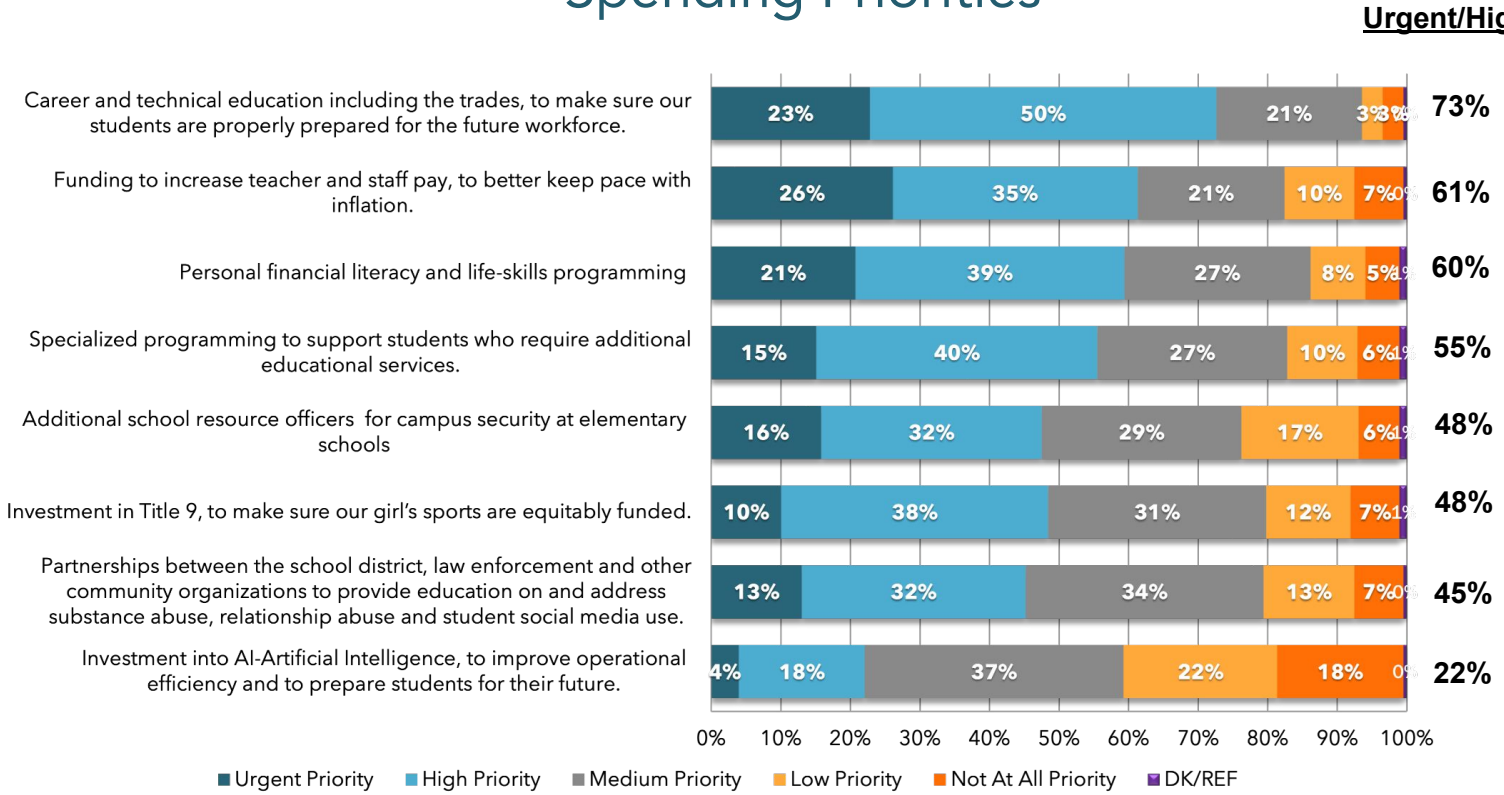
Levy Priority

Spending Priorities





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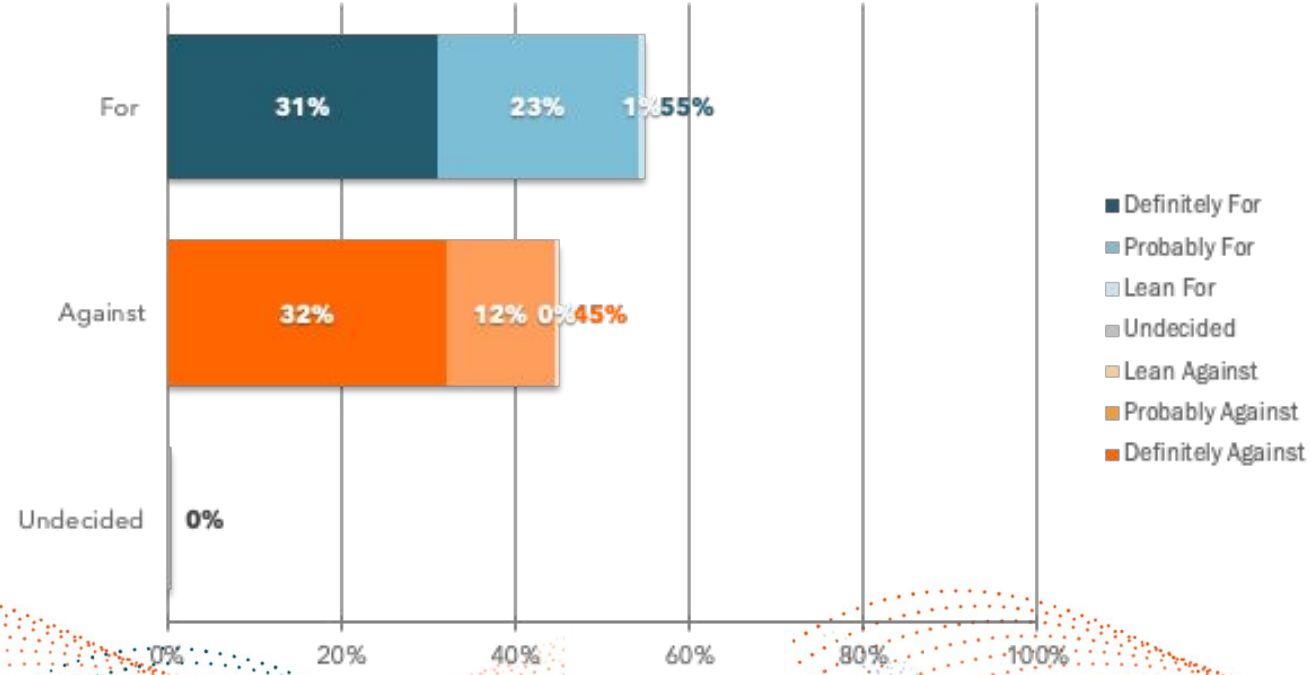
Ballot

MLO - Benchmark Ballot Test

19. Shall Douglas County school district taxes be increased ($50) million dollars annually, starting in 2027 and in each year thereafter, which is estimated to cost homeowners approximately $27 dollars a year per $100,000 dollars of home value based on current assessment values, for general fund purposes in order to provide:

- Ongoing investment in future-focused student programming and curriculum, including financial literacy, life skills, career and technical training
- School safety and security upgrades
- Funding for special needs education
- Teacher and staff compensation to keep pace with inflation





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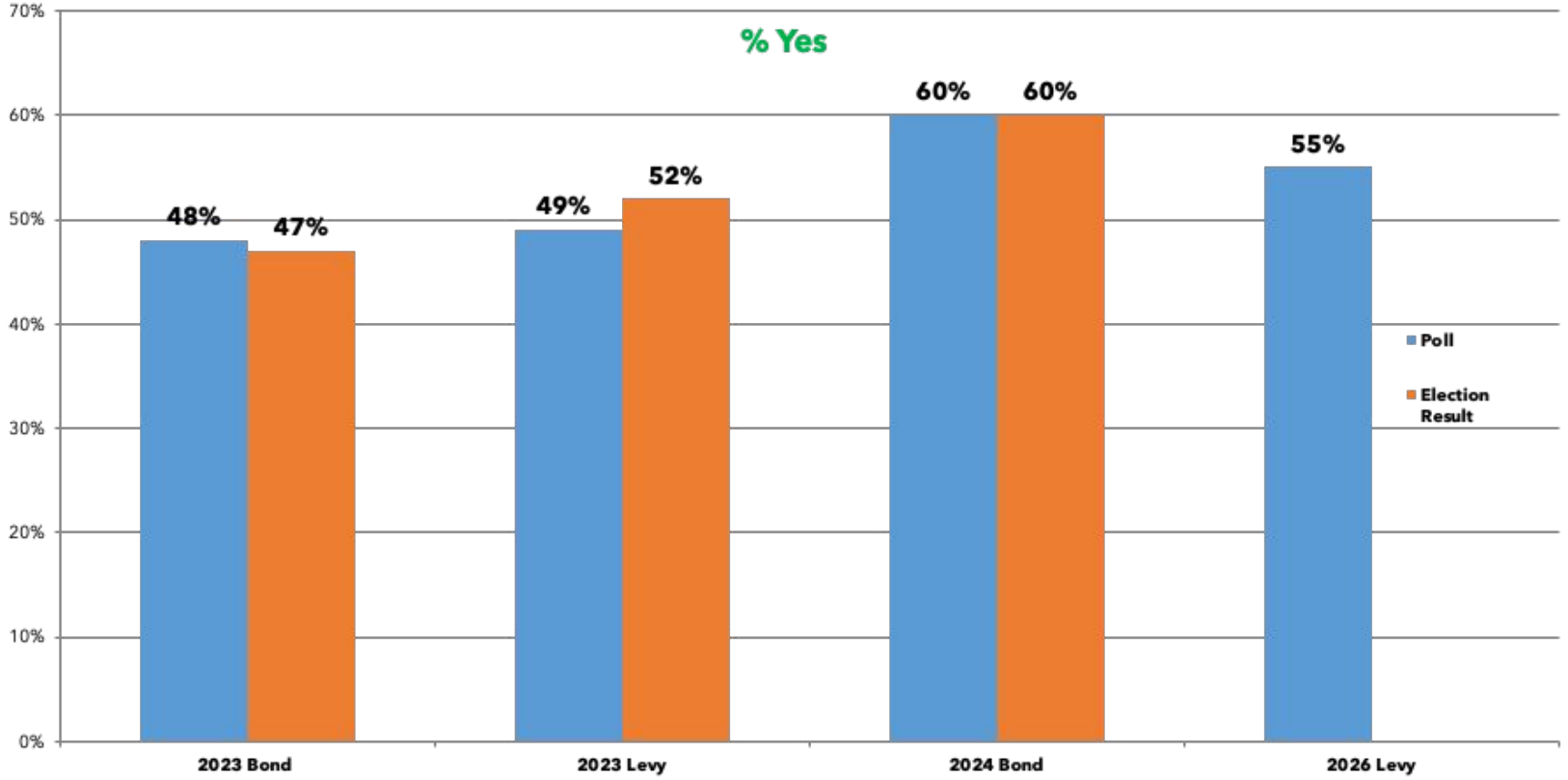
Past Results

Past Results





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Messaging

Issues Messages

21. SHORTFALL: Colorado is currently projecting a general fund budget shortfall of more than $1 billion dollars. Since approximately 50% of Douglas County School District's funding for students comes from the State, changes in the state budget will likely decrease funding levels to our district.

22. FIXED AMOUNT: Previously passed mill levy increases were structured to provide a fixed amount of annual money, rather than a percentage of property taxes. Because of inflation, the previous fixed amounts no longer cover our current school operating expenses.

23. RETURN ON INVESTMENT: The district's previous funding measures have had a good return on investment -- resulting in higher test scores and graduation rates, higher teacher retention, and higher morale.

24. MISSION CRITICAL EXPENSES: This new mill levy would fund school safety, future-focused student programming and curriculum, including financial literacy, specialized needs, career and technical training, teacher salaries and other mission-critical expenses.

25. DISTRICT CUTS: The district has been making cuts, including consolidating schools, to keep its budget in balance, but new longer-term mill levy money would help protect reserves and other mission-critical expenses into the future.

26. TRADES/TECHNICAL: There is currently a long waiting list for trades, technical career and workforce training. This new mill levy would make these popular programs more robust and available to more students.

27. LOW COST: This mill levy override proposal would cost approximately $27 dollars per year per 100k dollars of property value.

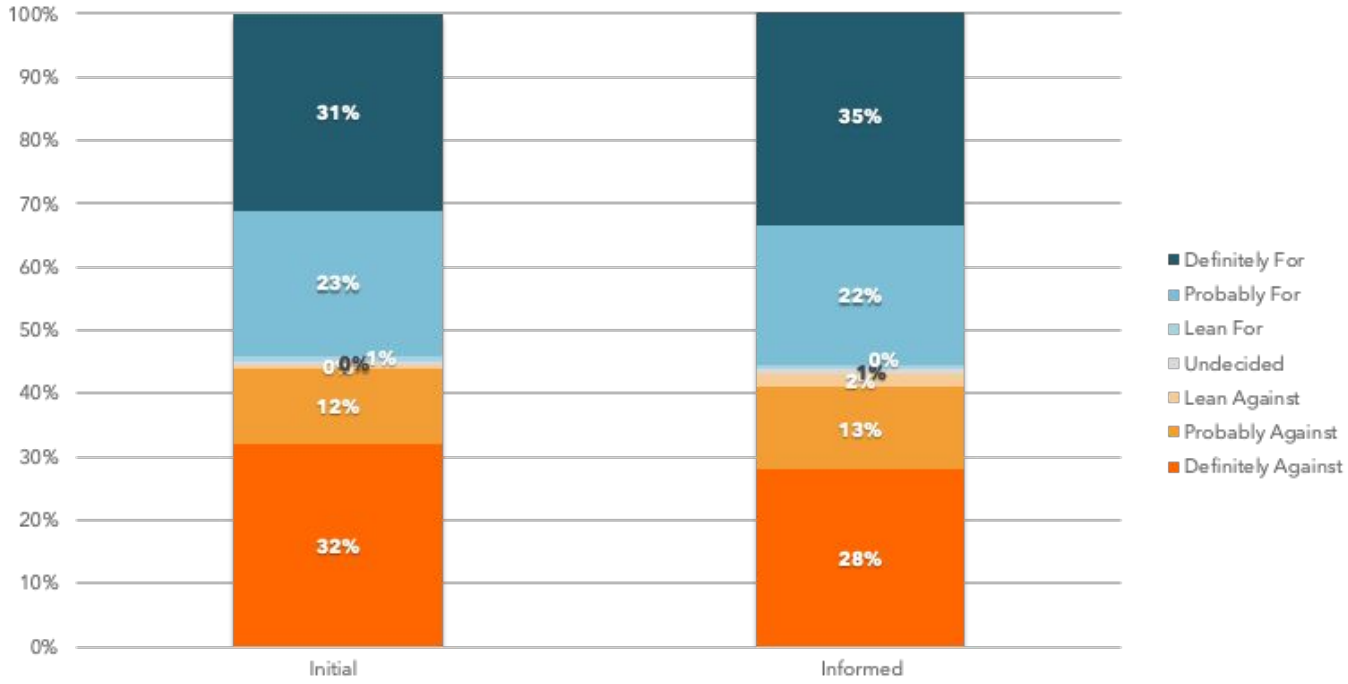
28. HIGH PERFORMING: The Douglas County School District is the highest-performing school district in the Denver Metro area, with student achievement results that reflect steady improvement and effective use of past investments.

29. FINANCIAL LITERACY: District families are requesting more financial literacy and life-skills training – starting in elementary school through high-school. This mill levy would fund this additional programming.

30. TEACHER COMPENSATION: Although recent funding measures have improved teacher and staff compensation, the District remains 7% below the average starting salary in the metro area. Continued investment in compensation is necessary to keep salaries competitive and aligned with inflation.

31. CAMPUS SECURITY: District families are asking for more support for campus security and safety. The mill levy would help fund these additional security officers and building upgrades.

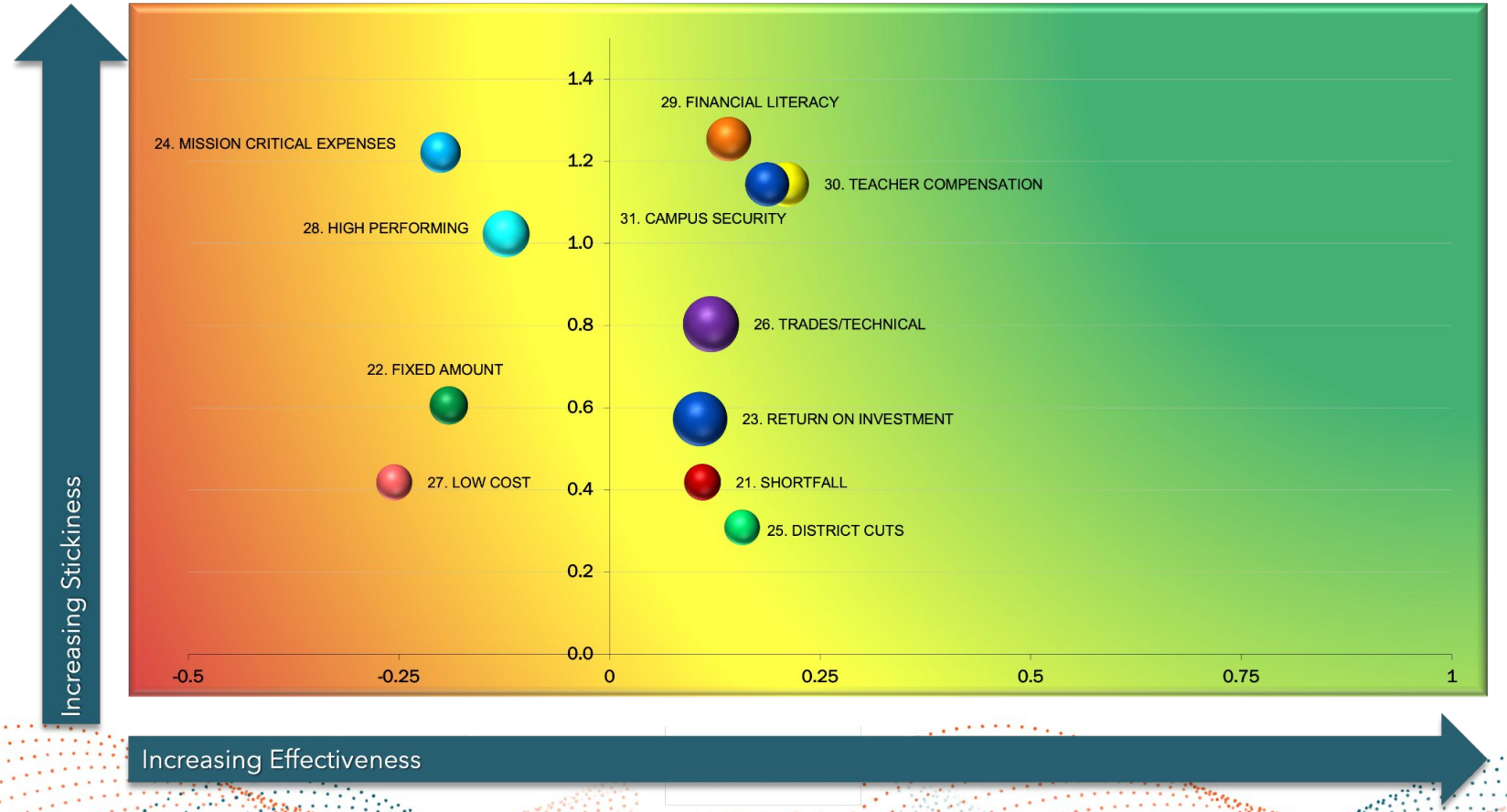
Informed Ballot



	Initial	Informed	Change
For	55%	56%	+1%
Against	45%	43%	-2%
Undecided	<1%	1%	+1%

Persuadable: 37%

Informed



Top Movers

	Size	Initial	Informed	Change
PARTY: Republican	34%	33%	39%	6%
CHILDREN:16-17 years old	7%	65%	71%	6%
GENAGE: Male 55+	19%	35%	40%	5%
SES: College+ <$75k	9%	55%	60%	5%
ZIP: 80126	11%	56%	61%	5%
VOTE HISTORY: 2 of 4	11%	52%	57%	5%
CHILDREN: 12-15 years old	11%	54%	58%	4%
EDU: High School or Less	8%	59%	62%	3%
SES: <College $75k+	19%	59%	62%	3%
VOTE HISTORY: 4 of 4	63%	52%	55%	3%

Most Effective Message

Avg P-Value: 0.56	Most Effective Message		
PARTY: Republican	28. HIGH PERFORMING (0.44)	25. DISTRICT CUTS (0.29)	27. LOW COST (0.24)
CHILDREN:16-17 years old	31. CAMPUS SECURITY (0.32)	29. FINANCIAL LITERACY (0.11)	
GENAGE: Male 55+	21. SHORTFALL (0.25)	24. MISSION CRITICAL EXPENSES (0.11)	
SES: College+ <$75k	27. LOW COST (0.87)	25. DISTRICT CUTS (0.58)	21. SHORTFALL (0.40)
ZIP: 80126	22. FIXED AMOUNT (0.28)	31. CAMPUS SECURITY (0.27)	21. SHORTFALL (0.25)
VOTE HISTORY: 2 of 4	31. CAMPUS SECURITY (0.31)	29. FINANCIAL LITERACY (0.31)	24. MISSION CRITICAL EXPENSES (0.27)
CHILDREN: 12-15 years old	23. RETURN ON INVESTMENT (0.24)	26. TRADES/TECHNICAL (0.17)	21. SHORTFALL (0.16)
EDU: High School or Less	24. MISSION CRITICAL EXPENSES (0.39)	31. CAMPUS SECURITY (0.38)	27. LOW COST (0.38)
SES: <College $75k+	27. LOW COST (0.94)	25. DISTRICT CUTS (0.49)	
VOTE HISTORY: 4 of 4	24. MISSION CRITICAL EXPENSES (0.43)	31. CAMPUS SECURITY (0.32)	30. TEACHER COMPENSATION (0.26)

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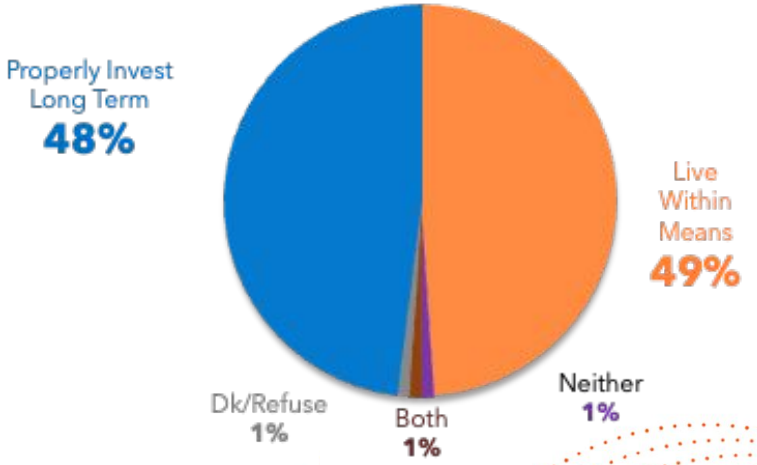
Ballot Measure Proposal

42. Now I am going to read you two points of view about the ballot measure proposal, and please tell me which one you agree with more…

(Some/Other) people say that the District has passed two tax measures in the last three years, and it should focus on living within its means, rather than asking taxpayers for additional revenue, leading to more taxes and more debt — especially as districtwide enrollment has declined.

…while…

(Some/Other) people say that the District needs a long-term, sustainable financial plan -- to continue investing in school safety, teacher pay to keep pace with inflation, and future-focused programming -- in order to maintain our top-performing schools and to protect property values.



Summary Findings

- The Political Environment is still quite partisan and polarized, as voters are evenly divided about the direction of the district, much along party lines, with Republicans the most pessimistic.
- Job approvals for the Superintendent, the Board and the Teacher's Union are all net positive, while voters continue to show solid approval for their Principal (40% approve) and love for their teachers (74% approval). Only the State Legislature is upside down (52% disapprove).
- What's most encouraging is that voters give the district very strong performance ratings – its highest overall score (54% A-B), with similar high scores for Academics, Teachers, Buildings, Sports, Extra-curriculars, and Safety. The only categories not receiving majority A-B scores were Career/Technical Educ and Special Educ.
- As for spending priorities, voters prioritize teacher/staff pay, career/technical, financial literacy, security and special education spending.
- The initial ballot test for an MLO proposal yields 55% support, with its strongest support coming from Democrats and voters under 55 years old – each of which are expected to overperform in this years' turnout.
- Top messages:
    - High Performance of the district/effective use of past money: Republicans, younger women, unincorporated voters
    - Campus Security: older women, IND, no kids
    - Teacher Comp: higher educated, high propensity voters

Research & Consulting Team

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Board Committee Feedback

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Board Committee Feedback

The following Board Committees* heard the same presentation given to the board on March 3:

- Fiscal Oversight Committee (March 12)
- District Accountability Committee (March 26)
- Long Range Planning Committee (April 1)

Additionally, the District Leadership Team (principals and district directors) provided feedback at their March 5 meeting.

** The next Mill Bond Oversight Committee meeting is April 29*

Board Committee Feedback

Committee members were asked to rank the district needs:

Priority	DAC (15)		FOC (7)		LRPC (11)	
Additional SRO	5.00	5	5.71	8	5.64	7
AI and Digital Literacy Programming	5.67	8	5.57	6	4.64	4
Annual Curricular Investment	4.20	3	4.57	4	5.00	6
Career & Technical Education (CTE) Operations	4.33	4	3.57	2	3.36	2
Compensation (2% - 4%)	2.00	1	3.86	3	2.64	1
Personal Financial Literacy and Life Skills Programming	5.53	7	2.43	1	4.73	5
Specialized Programming for Students with Special Education Needs	5.07	6	5.57	7	5.73	8
Student Programming (Specials)	4.20	3	4.71	5	4.27	3

District and Charter Leader Feedback

District and charter leaders were asked to rank the district needs:

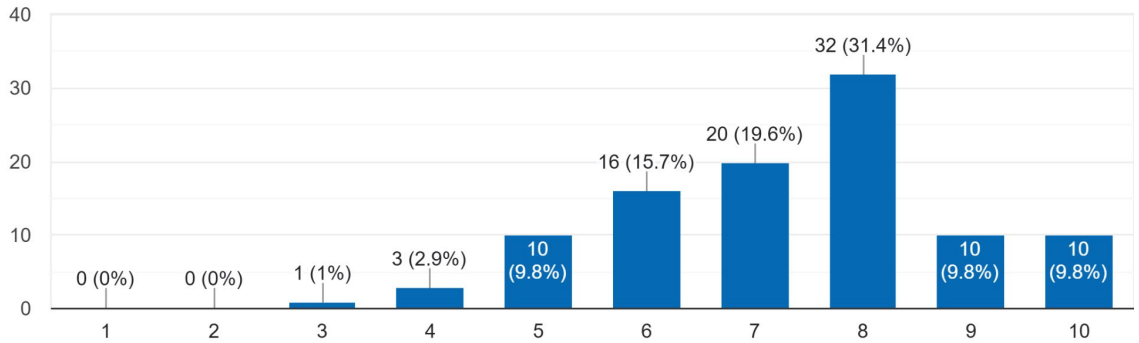
Priority	DLT (97)		Charter Leaders (12)		Average based on ALL feedback	
					Average	Ranking
Additional SRO	5.61	8	5.00	5	5.58	8
AI and Digital Literacy Programming	5.47	7	4.25	3	5.30	6
Annual Curricular Investment	4.10	3	2.75	2	3.99	2
Career & Technical Education (CTE) Operations	4.56	4	4.83	4	4.45	4
Compensation (2% - 4%)	2.09	1	1.58	1	2.13	1
Personal Financial Literacy and Life Skills Programming	5.41	6	6.08	8	5.35	7
Specialized Programming for Students with Special Education Needs	3.72	2	5.50	6	4.23	3
Student Programming (Specials)	5.05	5	6.00	7	4.97	5

MLO Feedback (con't)

Committee and DLT members were also asked to rate their understanding of the potential MLO and the proposed long-term funding sustainability plan

Please rate your level of understanding of the potential Mill Levy Override (MLO), based on the Long Term Sustainability presentation, on a scale from 1 to 10.

102 responses





Next Steps

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Next Steps

- The Board of Education can direct staff to continue explore a possible 2026 MLO, which will trigger staff to:
  - Plan out the detailed spend, impacts, etc. (in process)
  - Develop messaging and a detailed MLO communication plan (in process)
  - Final decision would be made by the Board of Education in August
- Consideration: a ballot initiative involves a tremendous commitment on the part of staff and the Board of Education



Questions?

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