

Lapeer Community Schools Community Survey

Executive Summary of Findings

This *Executive Summary of Findings* presents an overview of a community telephone survey conducted in the Lapeer Community School District during the period October 18-21, 2011. Four-hundred-seventy-two randomly selected residents ages 18 and older were interviewed by independent, impartial interviewers.

The 35-item questionnaire assessed opinions on a wide range of topics, including school communication, School District strengths, and school finance. Respondents were also asked to grade the School District, school district facilities, and the quality of customer service provided to residents by the School District. The questionnaire was developed by Banach, Banach & Cassidy (BB&C), an independent research firm, following input from the Board of Education, school administrators, and representatives of the Lapeer Community School District.

The survey has a 95% level of confidence with a plus/minus 4.5 percent sampling error at the 50:50 split. (Parents of school-age children were over-sampled by 100 to obtain a plus/minus 6.7 percent sampling error at the 50:50 split for the parent population.) The average interview lasted ten minutes and 12 seconds.

Note that numbers in this *Executive Summary of Findings* may not total 100 due to rounding or multiple responses to a question.

Grading the Lapeer Community School District

Respondents were asked to use the traditional ABC-scale to grade the Lapeer Community School District, all things considered. Sixty-five percent of respondents gave the Lapeer Community School District a grade of A or B.

As a matter of comparison, when respondents to the most recent *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* (the 42nd annual PDK/Gallup poll) were asked to grade the schools in their community, 49 percent of the respondents gave their local public schools a grade of A or B.

Just as parents in the national sampling gave higher grades than nonparents*, Lapeer parents awarded the Lapeer Community School District a higher grade (77% A or B) than did nonparents (54% A or B).

* "Nonparent" is defined as a respondent without school-age children

It is also noteworthy that 18 percent of the Lapeer nonparent respondents could not answer the question (as opposed to just three percent of parent respondents).

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to show how well they are doing in school. Suppose the Lapeer Community School District was being graded in the same way. All things considered, what grade would you give the Lapeer Community School District, an A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
A	56	23.9%	27	11.3%	83	17.6%
B	124	53.0%	101	42.4%	225	47.7%
C	42	17.9%	57	23.9%	99	21.0%
D	4	1.7%	6	2.5%	10	2.1%
F	0	0.0%	5	2.1%	5	1.1%
no response	8	3.4%	42	17.6%	50	10.6%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Grading other aspects of the Lapeer Community School District

Respondents were asked to use the ABC-scale to grade several aspects of the School District, including communication (listening and responding to members of the community) and the condition of School District facilities.

Fifty-one percent of the respondents assigned an A or B grade to the way the School District “listens and responds to members of the community.” Twenty-one percent assigned an average grade of C, seven percent gave the District a grade of D, and just three percent assigned a failing grade to the way the School District “listens and responds to members of the community.”

What grade would you give Lapeer Community School District for the way it listens and responds to members of the community... would you give the School District a grade of A, B, C, D, or F?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
A	62	26.5%	20	8.4%	82	17.4%
B	92	39.3%	67	28.2%	159	33.7%
C	45	19.2%	56	23.5%	101	21.4%
D	13	5.6%	19	8.0%	32	6.8%
F	5	2.1%	10	4.2%	15	3.2%
no response	17	7.3%	66	27.7%	83	17.6%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

When asked to grade “customer service” in the Lapeer Community School District, 57 percent of the respondents gave the District an A or B grade.

Note that more than one-third of the nonparent respondents (34%) were unable to answer the question.

What grade would you give customer service in the Lapeer School District?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
A	77	32.9%	32	13.4%	109	23.1%
B	93	39.7%	67	28.2%	160	33.9%
C	32	13.7%	46	19.3%	78	16.5%
D	5	2.1%	7	2.9%	12	2.5%
F	3	1.3%	4	1.7%	7	1.5%
no response	24	10.3%	82	34.5%	106	22.5%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

The “condition of school facilities” in the Lapeer Community School District was given an A/B grade by 67 percent of the survey respondents. Parents were more likely to assign an A/B grade than were nonparents (70% A/B vs. 63% A/B, respectively).

And, finally, what grade would you give the condition of school facilities in the Lapeer School District?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
A	93	39.7%	50	21.0%	143	30.3%
B	72	30.8%	100	42.0%	172	36.4%
C	40	17.1%	34	14.3%	74	15.7%
D	14	6.0%	7	2.9%	21	4.4%
F	4	1.7%	1	0.4%	5	1.1%
no response	11	4.7%	46	19.3%	57	12.1%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Those who gave school facilities a grade of C or lower were asked this follow-up question: *“In your opinion, what schools are most in need of maintenance, repair, or renovation?”* Lapeer West was named by 47 percent of the respondents as the school most in need of repair. Lapeer West was followed in the ranking by Lapeer East, which was named by 13 percent of respondents.

In your opinion, what schools are most in need of maintenance, repair, or renovation?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
Lapeer East	11	12.9%	7	12.5%	18	12.8%
Lapeer West	42	49.4%	24	42.9%	66	46.8%
Rolland	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Zemmer	1	1.2%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%
Lynch	0	0.0%	1	1.8%	1	0.7%
Maple Grove	2	2.4%	1	1.8%	3	2.1%
Mayfield	4	4.7%	1	1.8%	5	3.5%
Murphy	4	4.7%	2	3.6%	6	4.3%
Schickler	5	5.9%	2	3.6%	7	5.0%
Seaton	5	5.9%	2	3.6%	7	5.0%
Turrill	3	3.5%	2	3.6%	5	3.5%
Crampton	0	0.0%	1	1.8%	1	0.7%
no response	8	9.4%	13	23.2%	21	14.9%
Total	85	100.0%	56	100.0%	141	100.0%

Communication in the Lapeer Community School District

Thirty-six percent of survey respondents considered themselves “very well informed” about what is happening in the Lapeer Community School District while 41 percent said that they were “somewhat informed.”

As one might expect, parents considered themselves better informed than those respondents without school-age children. And, thirty-seven percent of nonparents said they were “not too well informed” about what is happening in the School District while just six percent of parents considered themselves “not too well informed.”

How well informed would you say you are about what is happening in the Lapeer Community School District – would you say you are very well informed, somewhat informed, or not too well informed?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
very well informed	119	50.9%	52	21.8%	171	36.2%
somewhat informed	97	41.5%	97	40.8%	194	41.1%
not too well informed	15	6.4%	87	36.6%	102	21.6%
no response	3	1.3%	2	0.8%	5	1.1%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

“School building publications/newsletters” was named the most frequent source of school information by survey respondents (18%).

“School building publications/newsletters” was the most frequent source of school information for parents (21%) while 19 percent of nonparents said their primary source of school information was the *Lapeer County Press*.

Below are the top five school information sources for parents and nonparents:

<u>Parents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Nonparents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
School building publications/newsletters	21%	<i>Lapeer County Press</i>	19%
My children/students	17	Friends or neighbors	17
District web site	16	School building Publications/newsletters	14
District publications/newsletters	12	My children/students	12
My school’s web site	7	District web site	5

When asked what school information was of most interest to them, respondents first mentioned “curriculum/what students are learning” (29%). Next, they said they were interested in “school activities/events” (13%) and “test scores/student achievement” (10%). The most frequent responses are displayed below.

What types of school information interest you most?

	<u>Parent</u>		<u>Nonparent</u>		<u>Total</u>	
-none/not interested in school information	7	2.0%	43	14.1%	50	7.7%
-information about the curriculum/what students are learning	108	31.2%	80	26.1%	188	28.8%
-finance information/how the money is spent	12	3.5%	38	12.4%	50	7.7%
-information about school teachers/staff	14	4.0%	9	2.9%	23	3.5%
-information about school district goals and priorities	14	4.0%	14	4.6%	28	4.3%
-test scores/student achievement	38	11.0%	28	9.2%	66	10.1%
-sports	18	5.2%	24	7.8%	42	6.4%

-school activities/events (music programs, art programs, etc.)	60	17.3%	25	8.2%	85	13.0%
-comparison to other school districts	5	1.4%	6	2.0%	11	1.7%
-transportation/busing information	6	1.7%	1	0.3%	7	1.1%
-student behavior/discipline/bullying	15	4.3%	4	1.3%	19	2.9%
-other	30	8.7%	21	6.9%	51	7.8%
-can't say/no response	19	5.5%	13	4.2%	32	4.9%
Total	346	100.0%	306	100.0%	652	100.0%

Visiting the Lapeer Community School District

Sixty-one percent of those surveyed said that they had been inside a Lapeer school since the beginning of the school year.

Have you been inside a Lapeer Community School since the beginning of this school year?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
yes	220	94.0%	67	28.2%	287	60.8%
no	14	6.0%	169	71.0%	183	38.8%
no response	0	0.0%	2	0.8%	2	0.4%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Of those who had visited a school, the primary purpose of the visit was to “drop off/pick up” a student (39%) or to “meet with a teacher” (11%).

What was the purpose of your visit?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
meet principal or assistant	6	2.7%	2	3.0%	8	2.8%
meet with teacher	30	13.6%	2	3.0%	32	11.1%
parent conference	7	3.2%	1	1.5%	8	2.8%
school play or activity	8	3.6%	10	14.9%	18	6.3%
athletic event	18	8.2%	6	9.0%	24	8.4%
school open house	17	7.7%	5	7.5%	22	7.7%
drop off/pick up student	96	43.6%	16	23.9%	112	39.0%
stop at school office	11	5.0%	6	9.0%	17	5.9%

other	23	10.5%	17	25.4%	40	13.9%
no response	4	1.8%	2	3.0%	6	2.1%
Total	220	100.0%	67	100.0%	287	100.0%

Of those who had visited a school, 94 percent said that the staff was “courteous and helpful” during their visit.

Strengths and Challenges in the Lapeer Community School District

“Teachers” and “all staff (teachers and other staff members)” were identified as the top two “best things” about the Lapeer Community School District (18% and 12%, respectively).

Note that teachers ranked first with both parent and nonparent respondents (19% and 16%, respectively).

What do you think are the two best things about the Lapeer Community School District?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
teachers	73	19.4%	55	16.0%	128	17.8%
all staff (teachers <u>and</u> other staff members)	56	14.9%	31	9.0%	87	12.1%
the curriculum / educational program	39	10.4%	35	10.2%	74	10.3%
the variety of programs/services	18	4.8%	9	2.6%	27	3.8%
AP/honors classes	5	1.3%	3	0.9%	8	1.1%
special education program	12	3.2%	3	0.9%	15	2.1%
help/assistance for struggling learners	9	2.4%	5	1.5%	14	1.9%
community involvement	25	6.6%	16	4.7%	41	5.7%
new middle schools	4	1.1%	4	1.2%	8	1.1%
school buildings and facilities, including new middle schools	15	4.0%	28	8.2%	43	6.0%
alternative high school	1	0.3%	1	0.3%	2	0.3%
	5	1.3%	5	1.5%	10	1.4%

technology						
sports/athletic program	17	4.5%	19	5.5%	36	5.0%
communication with the community	18	4.8%	13	3.8%	31	4.3%
after-school programs	10	2.7%	5	1.5%	15	2.1%
transportation/busing	5	1.3%	5	1.5%	10	1.4%
location/the community	9	2.4%	14	4.1%	23	3.2%
neighborhood schools	0	0.0%	4	1.2%	4	0.6%
everything	7	1.9%	11	3.2%	18	2.5%
nothing	12	3.2%	33	9.6%	45	6.3%
other	23	6.1%	20	5.8%	43	6.0%
can't say/no response	13	3.5%	24	7.0%	37	5.1%
Total	320	100.0%	343	100.0%	719	100.0%

When survey respondents were asked to identify “the top two challenges” facing the Lapeer Community School District, “finances/lack of funding” was by far the most frequent response (38%). It ranked first with parents (38%) and first with nonparents (38%).

“Declining enrollment” was the second most frequently mentioned challenge according to nine percent of respondents. It was mentioned by eight percent of parent respondents and ten percent of nonparent respondents. All other responses were mentioned by five percent or fewer of those who were interviewed.

What do you think are the top two challenges facing the Lapeer Community School District?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
finances/lack of funding	131	37.6%	130	37.6%	261	37.6%
lack of parent/community involvement	11	3.2%	12	3.5%	23	3.3%

too much emphasis on testing/state standards	8	2.3%	9	2.6%	17	2.4%
improving communication	14	4.0%	11	3.2%	25	3.6%
more help for struggling students	6	1.7%	16	4.6%	22	3.2%
declining enrollment	29	8.3%	33	9.5%	62	8.9%
student behavior/bullying	12	3.4%	10	2.9%	22	3.2%
providing more programs for gifted students	6	1.7%	1	0.3%	7	1.0%
replacing out-dated technology	7	2.0%	6	1.7%	13	1.9%
updating schools/facilities	17	4.9%	18	5.2%	35	5.0%
more teaching supplies/resources	15	4.3%	10	2.9%	25	3.6%
student discipline/behavior	15	4.3%	14	4.0%	29	4.2%
other	51	14.7%	41	11.8%	92	13.3%
can't say/no response	26	7.5%	35	10.1%	61	8.8%
Total	348	100.0%	346	100.0%	694	100.0%

Declining enrollment in Lapeer

The Lapeer Community School District's student enrollment peaked at about 9,000 students in 1980—31 years ago. Since then student enrollment has dropped about 3,000 students. Today there are just over 6,000 students attending the Lapeer Community School District.

Survey respondents were asked if they thought student enrollment had dropped about 1,000, about 2,000, about 3,000, or about 4,000 students since 1980. Only 14 percent of respondents said “about 3,000 students,” the correct response. Most respondents said enrollment had dropped “about 1,000 students” (25%). The second most frequent response was “about 2,000 students” (32%). Eight percent of respondents thought that student enrollment had dropped by “about 4,000 students.”

Options for Reducing Costs in the Lapeer Community School District

During the past few years significant adjustments in public school funding have forced many school districts to think about different ways of reducing costs or increasing revenue. Survey respondents were presented with five ways other school districts have reduced costs and, in the case of each one, asked whether they thought it should be considered in Lapeer.

Of the five ways to reduce costs, survey respondents were most opposed to eliminating student transportation. Ninety percent said this suggestion for reducing costs should not be considered in Lapeer. Elimination of student transportation was opposed by both parents (94%) and nonparents (86%).

Respondents also said that the District should not consider delaying school maintenance projects (72%), delaying upgrades to computers and other technology (71%), and recruiting students who do not live in the District (55%). On the other hand, 57 percent of respondents said the District should consider encouraging new families to move into Lapeer.

The five questions, including parent and nonparent responses, are displayed below.

Eliminate student transportation... do you think the schools should consider eliminating student transportation or not?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
consider	9	3.8%	22	9.2%	31	6.6%
do not consider	221	94.4%	205	86.1%	426	90.3%
no response	4	1.7%	11	4.6%	15	3.2%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Delay school maintenance projects... do you think the schools should consider that or not?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
consider	45	19.2%	54	22.7%	99	21.0%
do not consider	174	74.4%	167	70.2%	341	72.2%
no response	15	6.4%	17	7.1%	32	6.8%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Delay upgrades to computers and other technology... do you think the schools should consider delaying upgrades to computers and other technology or not?

	Parent	Nonparent	Total
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consider	55	23.5%	61	25.6%	116	24.6%
do not consider	171	73.1%	165	69.3%	336	71.2%
no response	8	3.4%	12	5.0%	20	4.2%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Market the schools to recruit students who do not live in the Lapeer Community School District... do you think the schools should consider that or not?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
consider	96	41.0%	89	37.4%	185	39.2%
do not consider	128	54.7%	132	55.5%	260	55.1%
no response	10	4.3%	17	7.1%	27	5.7%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Market the schools to encourage new families to move into Lapeer... do you think the schools should consider that or not?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
consider	135	57.7%	133	55.9%	268	56.8%
do not consider	89	38.0%	93	39.1%	182	38.6%
no response	10	4.3%	12	5.0%	22	4.7%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Survey respondents also were asked what people, programs, or services should be “exempt” if the District had to make substantial budget cuts. Most respondents (38%) said that nothing should be exempt. The next most frequent responses were “teachers” (13%), “the school curriculum” (6%), and “athletics”(5%).

Suppose the Lapeer Community School District had to make substantial budget cuts. If that were the case, are there any people, programs, or services that you think should be exempt from cuts?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
no/nothing should be exempt	87	37.2%	91	38.2%	178	37.7%
teachers	25	10.7%	37	15.5%	62	13.1%
student transportation	10	4.3%	4	1.7%	14	3.0%
anything that would						

increase class size	1	0.4%	2	0.8%	3	0.6%
the school curriculum	15	6.4%	15	6.3%	30	6.4%
food services	2	0.9%	2	0.8%	4	0.8%
athletics	16	6.8%	9	3.8%	25	5.3%
other	42	17.9%	36	15.1%	78	16.5%
no response	36	15.4%	42	17.6%	78	16.5%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Continued declines in student enrollment may mean that the Board of Education will have to consider the possibility of consolidating high schools and closing one of the two high school buildings. If this possibility became a reality, forty-seven percent of the survey respondents said that they would favor closing one of the high schools and updating the other high school to service all high school students in the District.

Of those who favored closing one of the high schools, 14 percent said they favored closing East High School while 64 percent said that they favored closing West High School.

Thirty-eight percent of those responding to the question said that the Board of Education should consider an option other than closing a high school.

Here are the top three options respondents suggested and the percentage of respondents suggesting them:

1. Keep both high schools open as long as financially possible 42%
2. Keep both high schools open, regardless of the cost 9%
3. Close both high schools and build a new high school 4%

Agree-Disagree Statements

Survey respondents were presented with four agree-disagree statements. After each statement, respondents were asked if they “tended to agree, tended to disagree, or neither agreed nor disagreed” with the statement.

Most respondents (74%) tended to agree that “the Lapeer Community School District provides students with the skills needed to be successful after graduation.” Parents were slightly more likely to agree than were nonparents (78% vs. 69%, respectively).

The Lapeer Community School District provides students with the skills needed to be successful after graduation... Do you tend to agree, tend to disagree, or neither agree nor disagree?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
tend to agree	183	78.2%	165	69.3%	348	73.7%
tend to disagree	14	6.0%	29	12.2%	43	9.1%
neither agree or disagree	31	13.2%	30	12.6%	61	12.9%
no response	6	2.6%	14	5.9%	20	4.2%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

Most respondents (82%) tended to agree that the Lapeer Community Schools should encourage more community members to serve as volunteers in the schools. Eighty-two percent of parents and nonparents tended to agree with the statement.

As the display below illustrates, parent and nonparent opinions were quite similar regarding community members volunteering in the schools.

The Lapeer Community School District should encourage more community members to serve as volunteers in the schools.

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
tend to agree	193	82.5%	196	82.4%	389	82.4%
tend to disagree	22	9.4%	17	7.1%	39	8.3%
neither agree or disagree	18	7.7%	15	6.3%	33	7.0%
no response	1	0.4%	10	4.2%	11	2.3%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

The third agree-disagree statement was related to community perceptions of the School District. Respondents were asked if people in the community tended to say mostly positive things about the School District. Sixty-one percent of survey respondents tended to agree that people were mostly positive in their comments about the School District. Sixty-nine percent of parents and 53 percent of nonparents tended to agree with the statement.

When people in the community say things about the Lapeer Community Schools, what they say is mostly positive.

	Parent	Nonparent	Total
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tend to agree	161	68.8%	127	53.4%	288	61.0%
tend to disagree	45	19.2%	53	22.3%	98	20.8%
neither agree or disagree	26	11.1%	35	14.7%	61	12.9%
no response	2	0.9%	23	9.7%	25	5.3%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

In a parallel question, respondents were asked if they would recommend the Lapeer Community Schools to a friend who has school-age children. Eighty-five percent of respondents said that they would recommend the District to a friend.

Would you recommend the Lapeer Community Schools to a friend who has school-age children?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
yes	208	88.9%	195	81.9%	403	85.4%
no	15	6.4%	22	9.2%	37	7.8%
no response	11	4.7%	21	8.8%	32	6.8%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

The final agree-disagree statement asked whether the District should consider creating magnet or specialized programs in its existing schools. These programs would be available to all Lapeer Community School District students. Fifty-eight percent tended to agree that creating magnet schools was something the Lapeer Community School District should consider. Sixteen percent tended to disagree while 18 percent neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Lapeer should consider creating magnet programs in its existing schools. For example, one or more elementary schools might operate year-round. Here's another example: one or both high schools might emphasize students using technology. All Lapeer students would be eligible to attend any of the magnet programs that are created.

Do you tend to agree, tend to disagree, or neither agree nor disagree that Lapeer should consider creating magnet schools?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
tend to agree	133	56.8%	141	59.2%	274	58.1%
tend to disagree	37	15.8%	40	16.8%	77	16.3%
neither agree or disagree	51	21.8%	36	15.1%	87	18.4%
no response	13	5.6%	21	8.8%	34	7.2%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

The survey ended by asking respondents what one message they would like to send to the Board of Education. Most respondents—both parents and nonparents—encouraged the Board to

“keep up the good work.” The primary responses to the question are displayed below. A list of all 167 “other” or unclassified responses appear in the *Report of Findings*.

If you could send one message to the School Board, what would that one message be?

	Parent		Nonparent		Total	
keep up the good work	45	19.2%	30	12.6%	75	15.9%
cut costs/taxes	7	3.0%	28	11.8%	35	7.4%
close a high school	3	1.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.6%
improve the curriculum	19	8.1%	29	12.2%	48	10.2%
listen to people	28	12.0%	21	8.8%	49	10.4%
expand music program	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
expand art program	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	2	0.4%
expand physical education program	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	2	0.4%
expand athletic program	2	0.9%	0	0.0%	2	0.4%
expand pre-school program	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
other	86	36.8%	81	34.0%	167	35.4%
can't say/no response	41	17.5%	47	19.7%	88	18.6%
Total	234	100.0%	238	100.0%	472	100.0%

A document titled *Total Number & Percent Responses* is included the *Report of Findings*. It provides the totals and percentages for all survey questions. The *Report of Findings* also includes demographics and all verbatim responses to open-end questions.

A list of survey questions is also included in the *Report of Findings*.