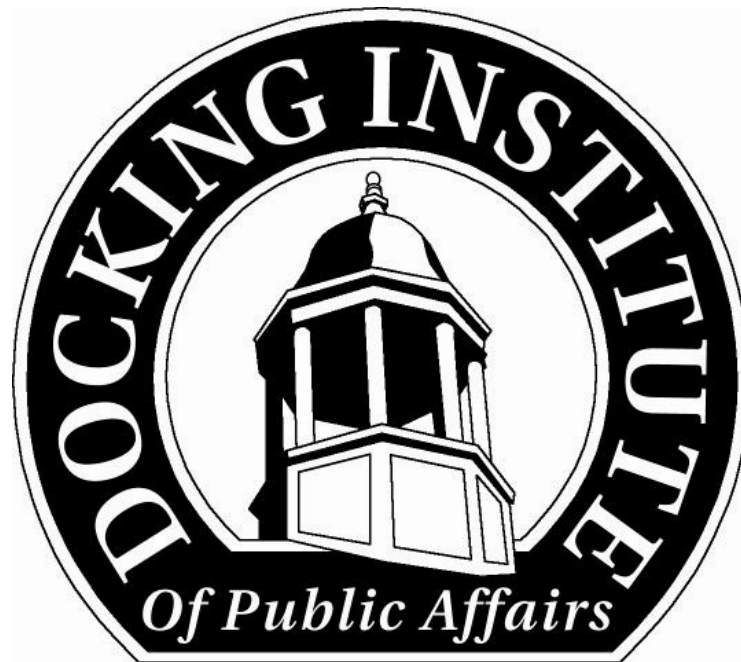
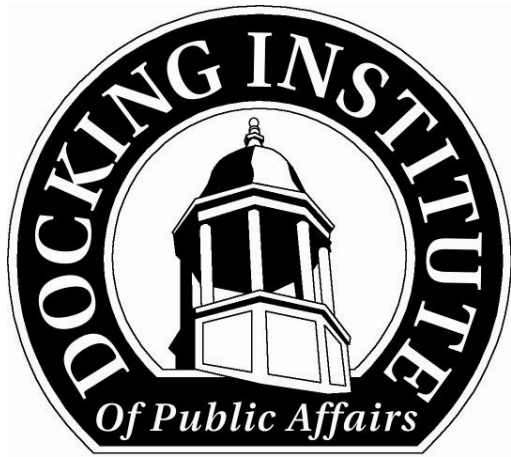


# Unified School District 109 School Bond Survey 2013



Prepared For  
**Unified School District 109 Administrators**  
Prepared By  
**The Docking Institute of Public Affairs  
Fort Hays State University**

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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

# USD 109 School Bond Survey 2013

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## **Prepared For:**

USD 109 Administrators  
In pursuit of  
The Docking Institute's Public Affairs Mission

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## Executive Summary

- About twice as many respondents (61%) favored maintaining a two campus system as those favoring a consolidated campus (31%). Those favoring the two-campus system were much more likely to also favor piecemeal maintenance, while those favoring a consolidated campus were much more likely to also favor building new facilities.
- Respondents varied highly in their level of concern that USD 109 might be consolidated with adjacent school districts due to decreasing enrollments, with roughly equal proportions being “very concerned” and “not concerned at all.” The most common response, however, was “somewhat concerned.” These respondents were more likely to support Bonds 2, 3 and 4. Those who were “somewhat concerned” and “very concerned” were more likely to support Bond 5.
- Support for the 12 proposed improvement projects varied widely among respondents, with the district-wide technology upgrade, plumbing/heating/air conditioning upgrade and roof replacement being the three most popular. The most unpopular were the secondary gym, bleachers and playground equipment and East Elementary windows and blinds.
- Eight of the projects received positive ratings by over half of respondents. Only one project, the secondary gym, received negative ratings by over one-half of respondents.
- Less than half of respondents said they would vote for any of the 5 bond scenarios (see Appendix A). Bond 5 was the only scenario for which more respondents voted for than against, with 47% voting in favor, 42% against and 11% giving no response. Assuming non-responders to this question will vote in proportion to responders, 53% would vote for Bond 5.
- Opposition was stronger than support for the remaining bond scenarios, even when all of those not responding to the questions are assumed to support the bonds. The data suggest Bonds 1 through 4 would have little chance of passing.

- In-depth analysis comparing respondents' self-reported voting behavior in the 2012 election to known voting proportions enabled researchers to estimate the proportion of those not responding to the bond scenario questions that would vote for each bond. The estimates increase the percentage that would vote for Bond 5 to 55%, but still left the remaining bond scenarios short of majority support.
- Respondents who said they did not vote in the summer 2012 bond election were more likely to say they would vote for Bond 4 and Bond 5 than those who said they did vote in the 2012 bond election.
- Among respondents who did report voting in the 2012 bond election, those who said they voted against Questions 1 and 2 were more likely to say they would vote for Bond 5, but less likely to say they would vote for Bond 4, than respondents who said they voted for Questions 1 and 2. These results suggest that some voters were highly sensitive to the costs involved, since Questions 1 and 2 involved costs similar to Bond 4, but much higher costs than Bond 5.
- An analysis model computing each respondent's support for Bonds 4 and 5 was created which sums the ratings for each project in each bond scenario. The models showed high levels of mean support for both bond scenarios, despite 55% of respondents indicating directly that they would vote against Bond 4 and 42% indicating they would vote against Bond 5.
- Findings described in the previous bullet suggest that factors other than perceived need for school improvements among respondents are affecting propensity to vote to fund these improvements. It is possible that the current uncertainty regarding a potential increase in taxes imposed by state-level legislation is making many respondents reluctant to commit to local tax increases at this time.
- The researcher recommends that only Bond 5 be considered at this time and predicts that any bond issue containing additional projects at higher cost be unlikely to pass at this time.

## Methodology

In January of 2013, the Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University contracted with Unified School District 109 to conduct a study to measure District voter support for a variety of prospective improvement projects identified as high-need by District administrators, as well as support for and opposition to 5 specific school bond proposals. The purpose of the study is to provide valid data to assist administrators in authoring a bond proposal that will best meet the educational needs of students in the District and have a high probability of passing in a bond election. The opinions of, and preferences for, the various proposed improvement projects among likely voters are measured through a self-administered survey delivered to all registered voters in the District via U.S. Postal Service.

The survey instrument (Appendix B) was constructed in cooperation with District administrators and designed to measure respondents' opinions on some critical issues facing USD 109, support for each of 12 individual improvement projects and whether the respondent would vote for 5 specific bond proposals. The survey also asks respondents to self-report whether they voted in the fall 2012 bond election, and if so, how they voted.

Most of the sample was acquired from the Republic County Clerk, but also included a few District members residing in Jewell, Cloud and Washington Counties. These county clerks provided the latest official list of registered voters in the District with their home mailing addresses. The Institute had the USPS update the file to include recent moves, leaving a sample of 2,853 registered voters. It was assumed that likely voters among this population would also be more likely to respond to the survey. Surveys were mailed on March 29, and data collection was terminated on April 29, 2013, at which time 861 completed surveys had been returned for a response rate of 30.2%. Because all members of the target population were given an opportunity to participate, there is no margin of error. The survey data were entered into an SPSS data file for analysis.

## Responses to Survey Questions

Figure 1

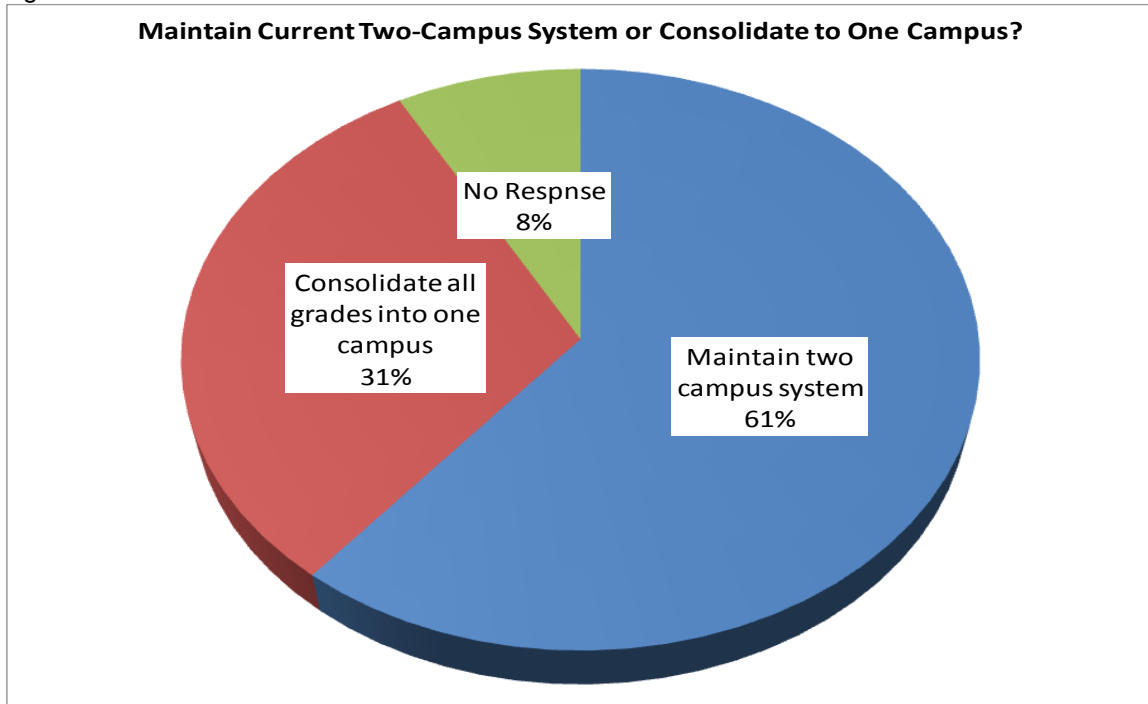
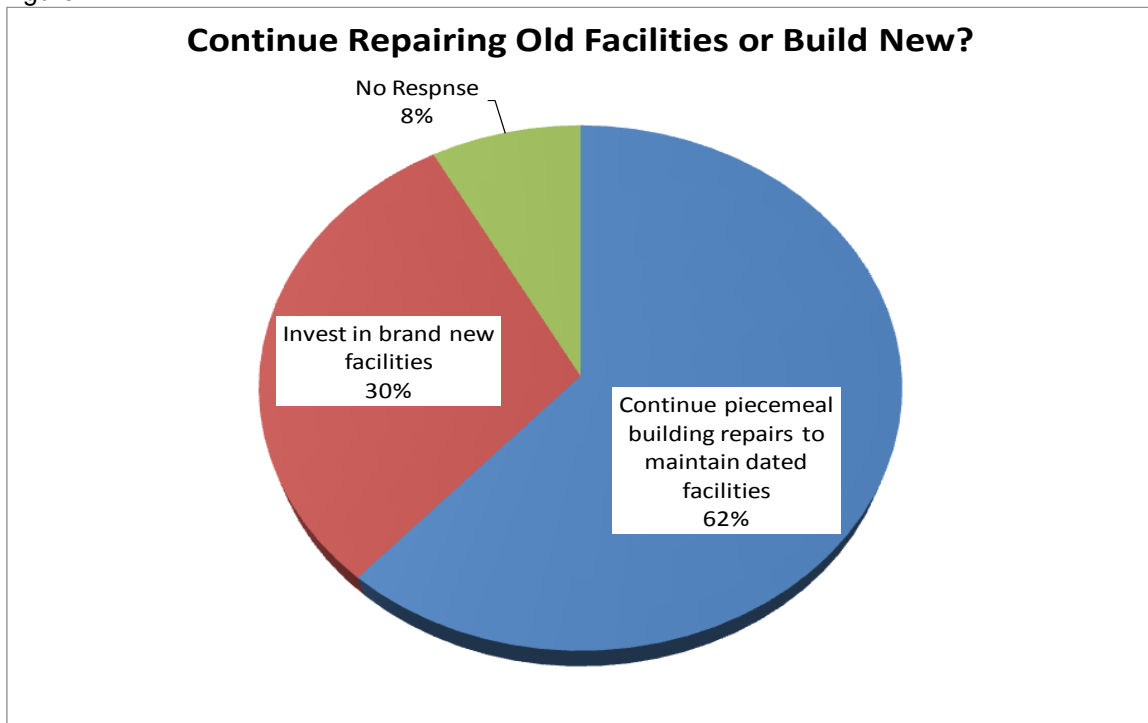


Figure 1 shows that about three-fifths of respondents prefer to maintain the current two-campus system, while almost one-third prefer to consolidate all grades into one campus.

Figure 2



Similarly, about three-fifths of respondents prefer to continue maintaining the current buildings with piecemeal repairs, while three-tenths would rather the District build brand new buildings.



Figure 3

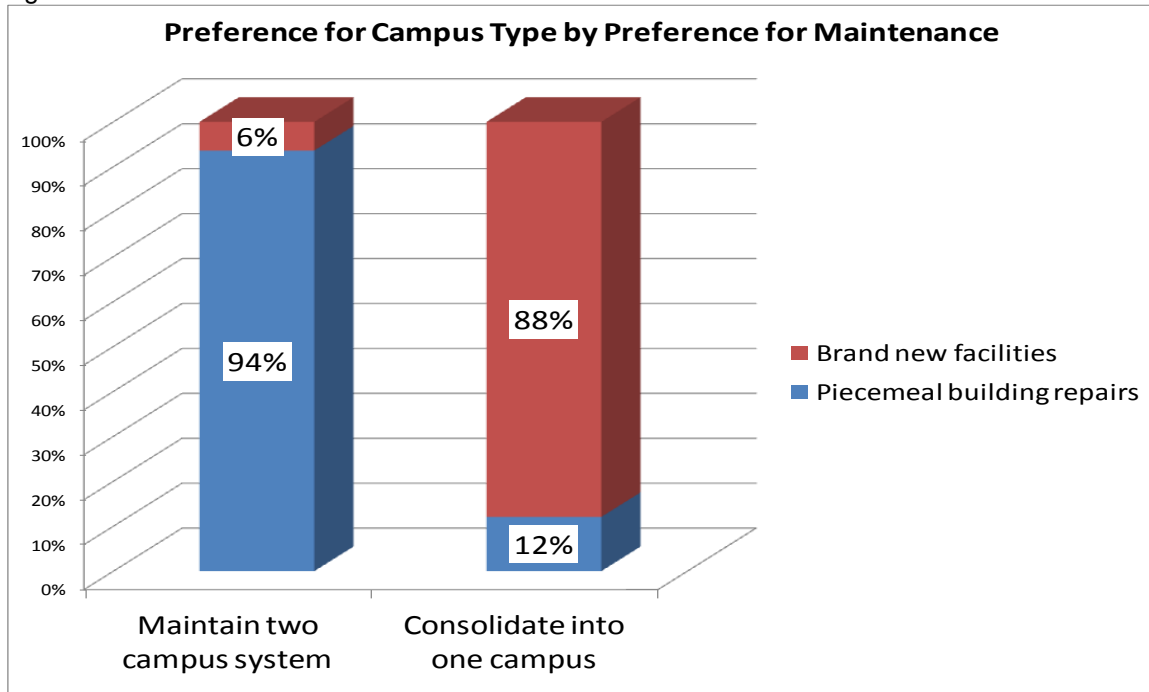
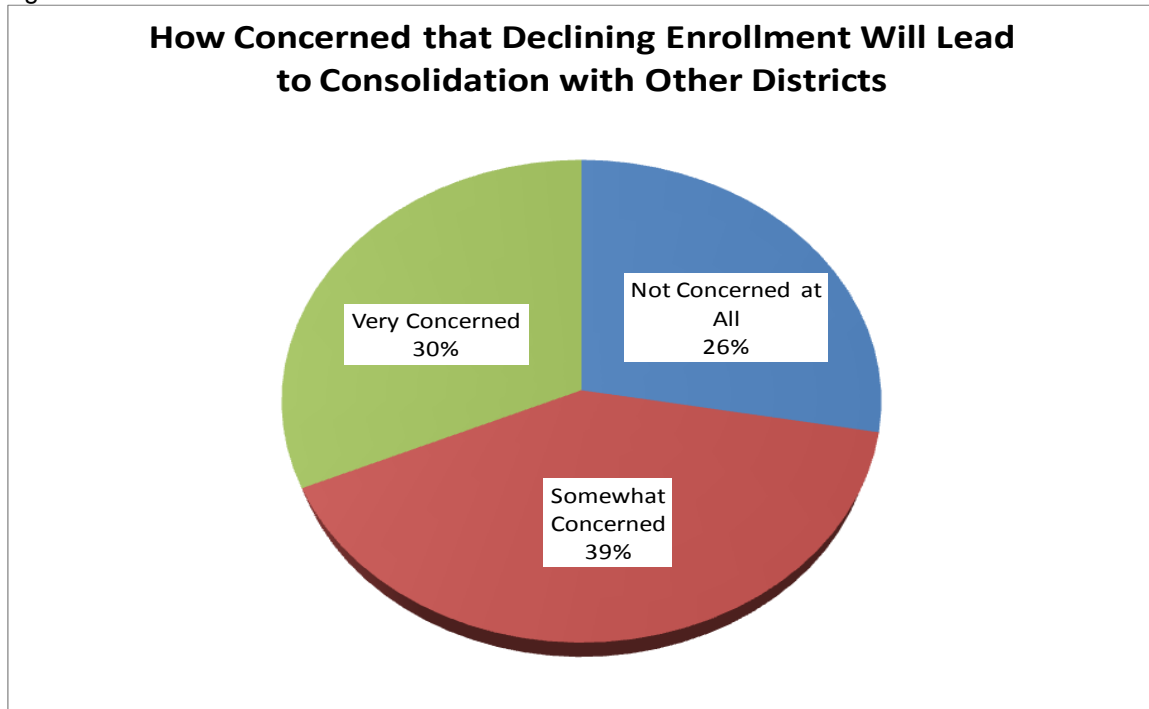


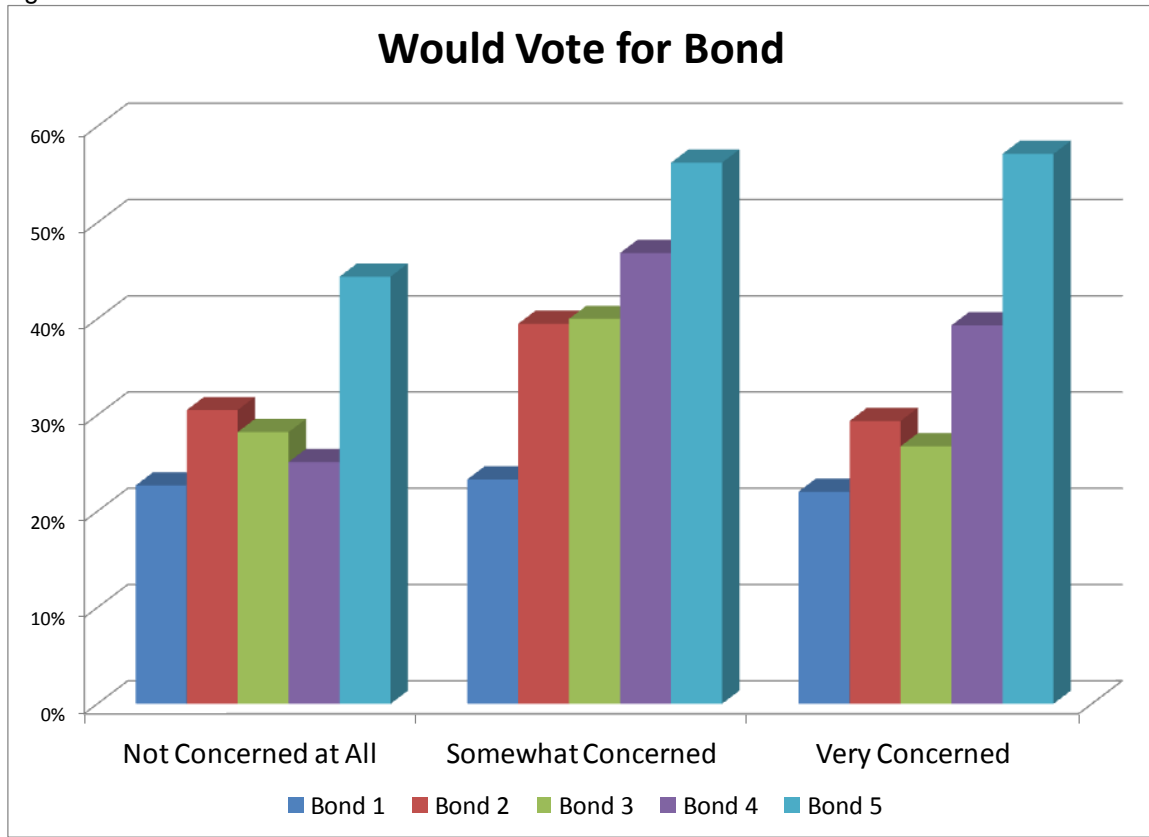
Figure 3 shows a strong relationship between responses to the first two survey questions. Respondents who prefer maintaining the two-campus system overwhelmingly prefer piecemeal maintenance. Those who want to consolidate the campuses are much more likely to prefer new buildings.

Figure 4



Respondents were highly divided in their concern that declining enrollments and funding might lead to consolidating USD 109 with other districts. About one-fourth expressed no concern, while about two-fifths expressed some concern. Three-tenths indicated they were “very concerned.”

Figure 5



The question measuring concern that declining students and revenues would lead to consolidation of USD 109 with other districts was crosstabulated by the questions asking if the respondent would vote for Bonds 1 through 5. Figure 5 shows a few consistent trends. Bond 1 was favored by equal proportions. Support for Bonds 2, 3 and 4, to varying degrees, was highest among those who are “somewhat concerned.” Support for Bond 5, however, was about 11% weaker among respondents who said they were “not concerned at all.”

Figure 6

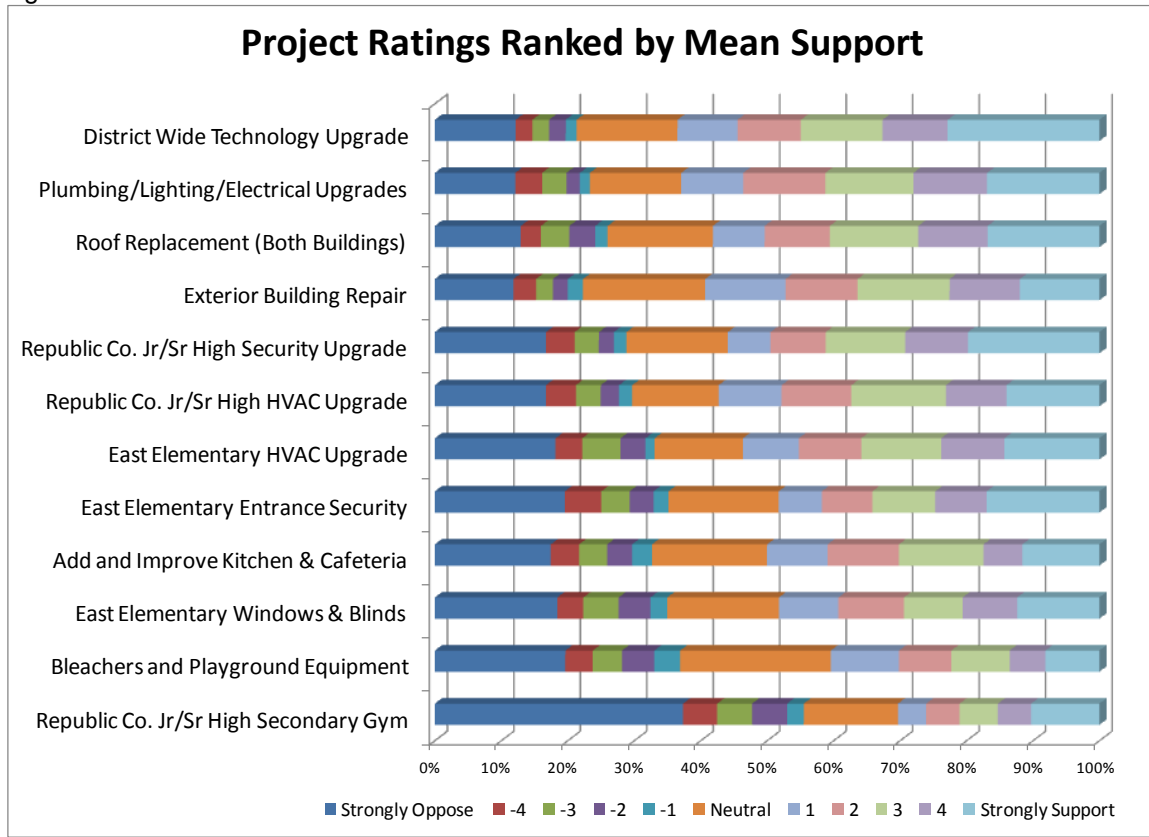


Figure 6 shows all twelve improvement projects being considered rank ordered by the mean rating of all respondents. The various colored areas represent the proportion of respondents assigning various ratings to each project. Noteworthy is a strong tendency for many respondents to rate the projects with either extreme scores or neutral ratings.

The most highly rated projects were the district-wide technology upgrade, upgrades to the utilities infrastructures, roof replacements for both buildings and exterior building repairs. These projects were rated positively by at least 60% of respondents, and no more than 10% rated these projects with a -5.

The most negatively rated project was the secondary gym, given negative ratings by well over half of respondents and given a -5 by over one-third. Bleachers and playground equipment was the second most negatively rated item, but not nearly to the degree of the secondary gym. Less than one-fifth of respondents rated the bleachers and playground equipment project with a -5, while over 40% assigned positive ratings. The East Elementary windows and blinds, kitchen and cafeteria and East Elementary entrance security projects all had levels of opposition similar to those of the bleachers and playground equipment, but received more positive scores and fewer neutral scores.

Figure 7

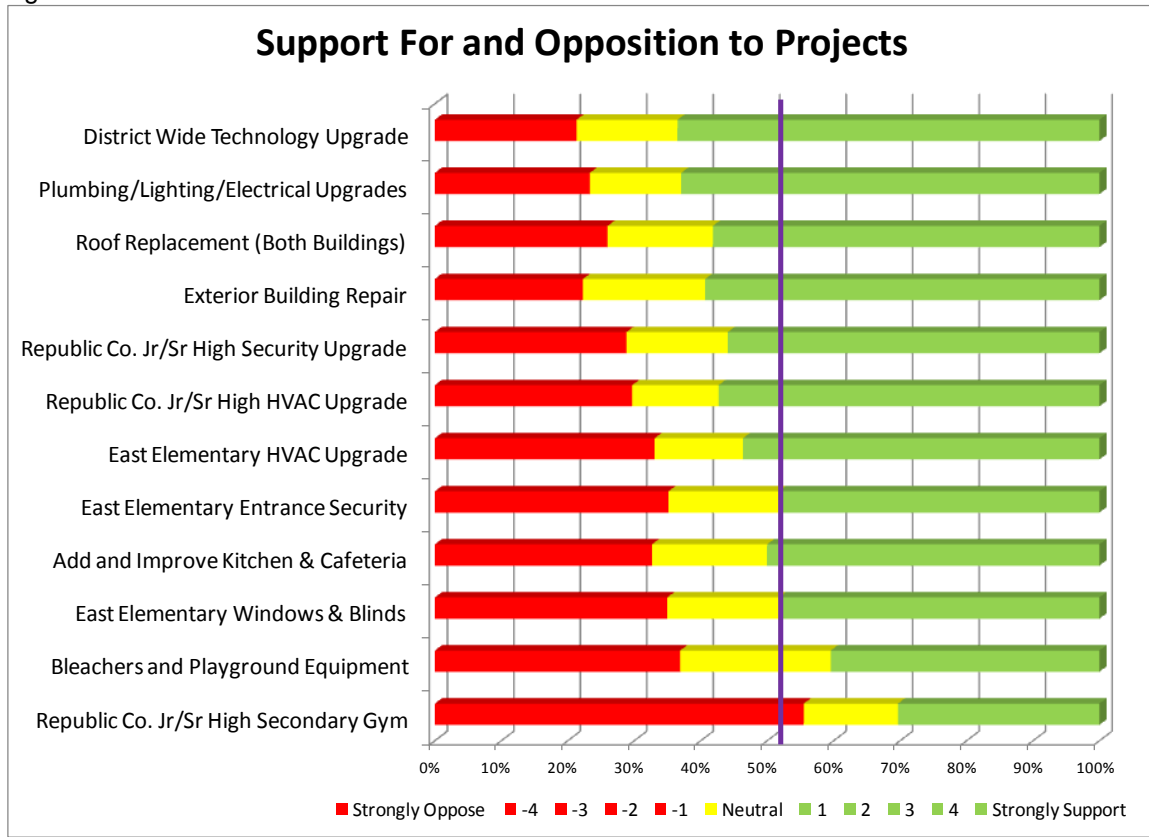


Figure 7 shows the same distributions as Figure 6, but the colored areas have been collapsed into three categories, negative ratings in red, positive ratings in green and neutral ratings in yellow. Since elections are determined by a majority vote, yes or no, an assessment of the median ratings may be a better way to predict the outcome of a vote. Since majority rules, the vertical 50% line is the key demarcation for determining whether a particular project has majority support.

Examination of the chart indicates that the top seven projects obtained positive ratings from over half of respondents, while the next three received positive ratings from nearly half. Although the bleachers and playground equipment did not get a majority of positive ratings, it received more positive than negative ratings and the most neutral votes of any project. The secondary gym received considerably more negative ratings than positive, with over half of respondents rating this project negatively.

Figure 8

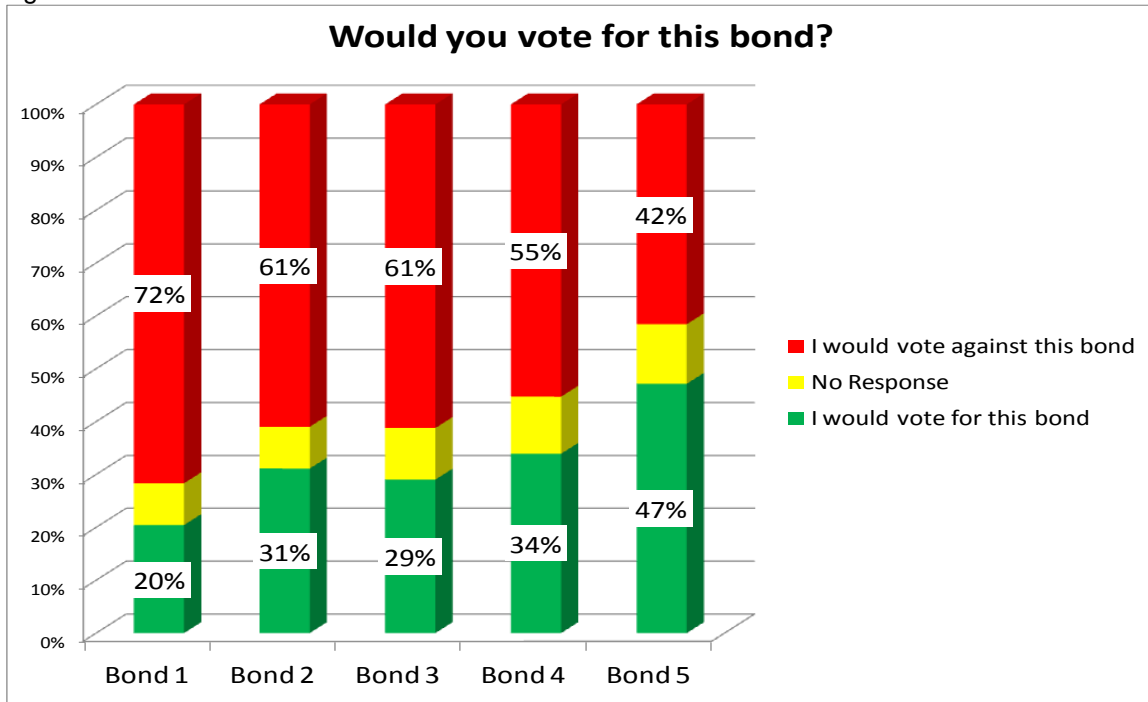


Figure 8 shows the results of the five survey questions describing five hypothetical bond scenarios and asking respondents whether they would vote for each. Bond 5 is the only one that received close to majority support. See Appendix A for a description of the scenarios.

Figure 9

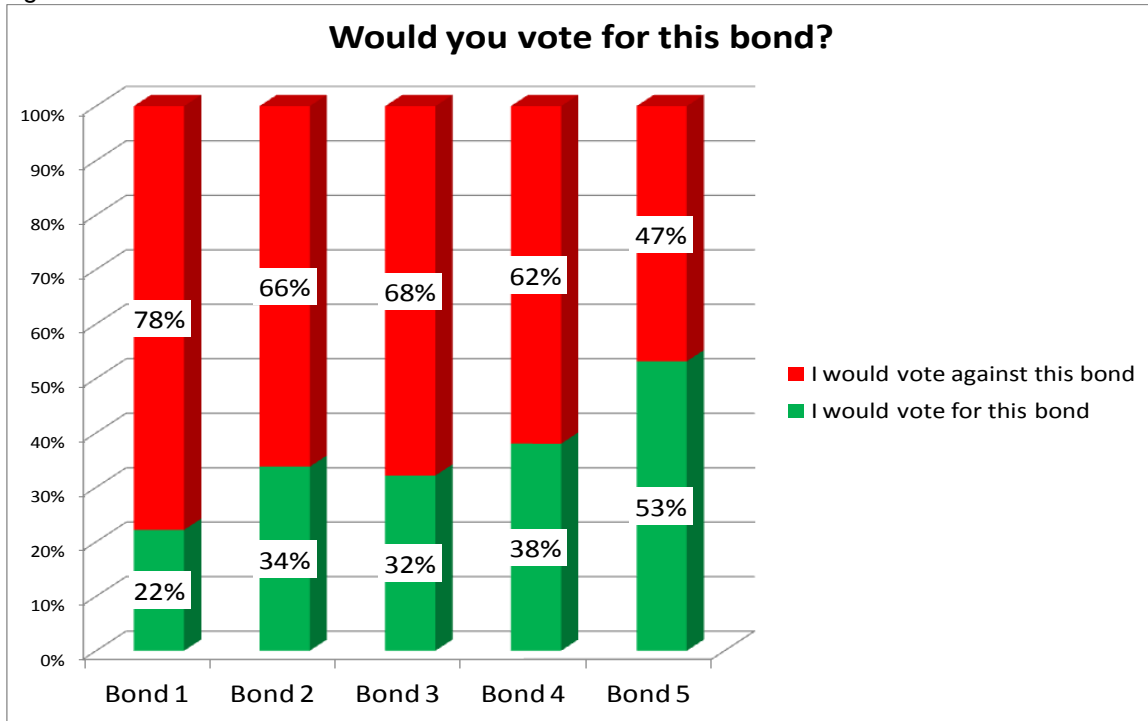
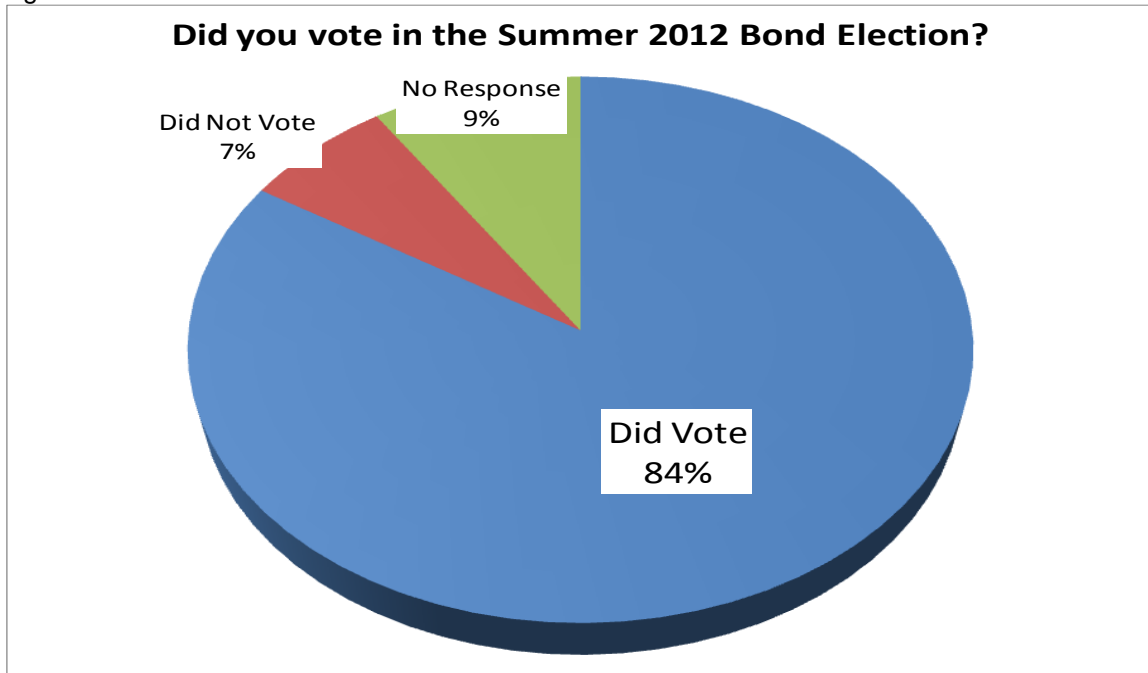


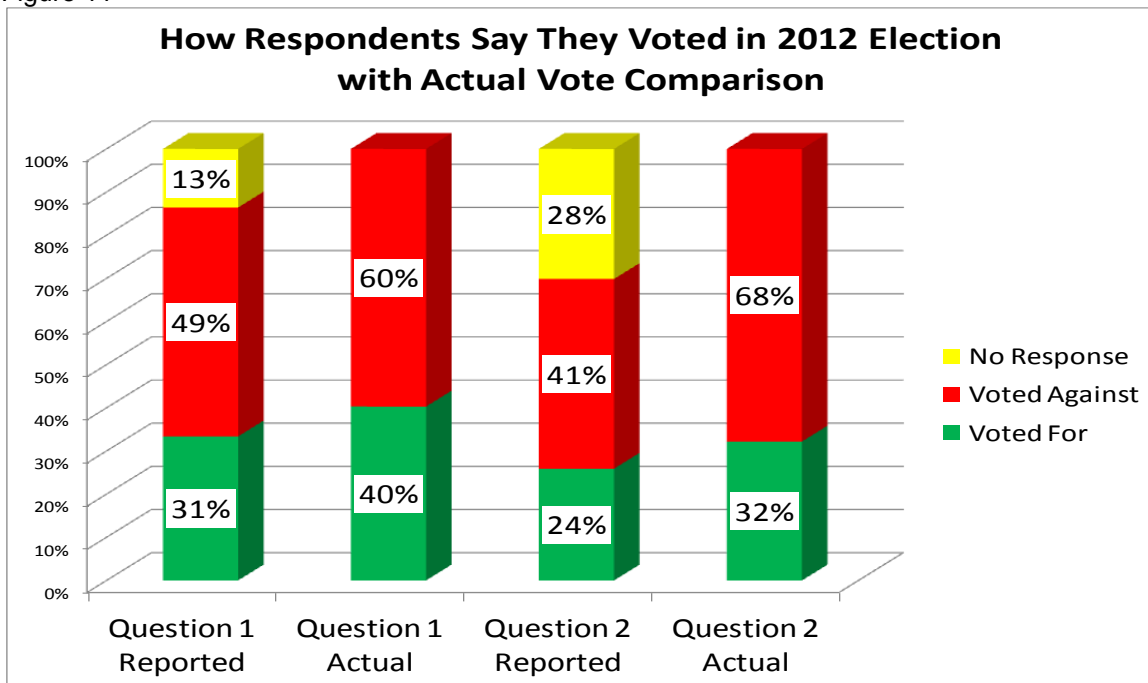
Figure 9 shows the distributions of support for each bond with the non-respondents excluded. If it is assumed that non-respondents would either not vote or vote proportionally to those who did respond to the question, this is the best estimate of the outcome of a given vote.

Figure 10



Respondents were asked if they voted in the recent USD 109 bond election in summer of 2012. Figure 10 shows that well over four-fifths of respondents indicated they did vote in that election.

Figure 11



Respondents who said they voted in the summer 2012 bond election were then asked to report how they voted on both questions. Thirty-one percent of voting respondents said they voted in favor of Question 1, while only 24% said they voted for Question 2. These distributions are compared to the known vote results, which are shown in the adjacent columns on the graph. A comparison shows that the survey questions underestimated the percent voting in favor of each question, suggesting that a certain percentage of the non-respondents to these survey questions also voted in favor of each question.

Using the discrepancies between the results of the self-reported questions asking respondents how they voted in the last election and the actual known vote results, a model was created which ascribes votes of the non-respondents based on these discrepancies. The discrepancies were 9% and 8% for Questions 1 and 2, respectively. This suggests that 9 of the 13 percentage points (70%) who did not respond to the Question 1 survey item would have voted for the bond, and 4 of the 13 (30%) would have voted against it. Similarly, it suggests that the 8 of the 28 non-respondent percentage points (28%) would have voted for Question 2, and 20 of 28 (72%) would have voted against it. So on the most popular question (Question 1), 72% of the non-respondents are attributable to a yes vote, but only 28% on the less popular question (Question 2). Applying these percentages to non-respondents for the most and least popular of the five bond scenarios should be valid estimates for estimating how respondents would actually vote in an election. For the three bond scenarios in between, the corrective factors are interpolated at 39%, 50% and 61%. When votes for non-respondents are attributed based on this method, we get the results shown in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12

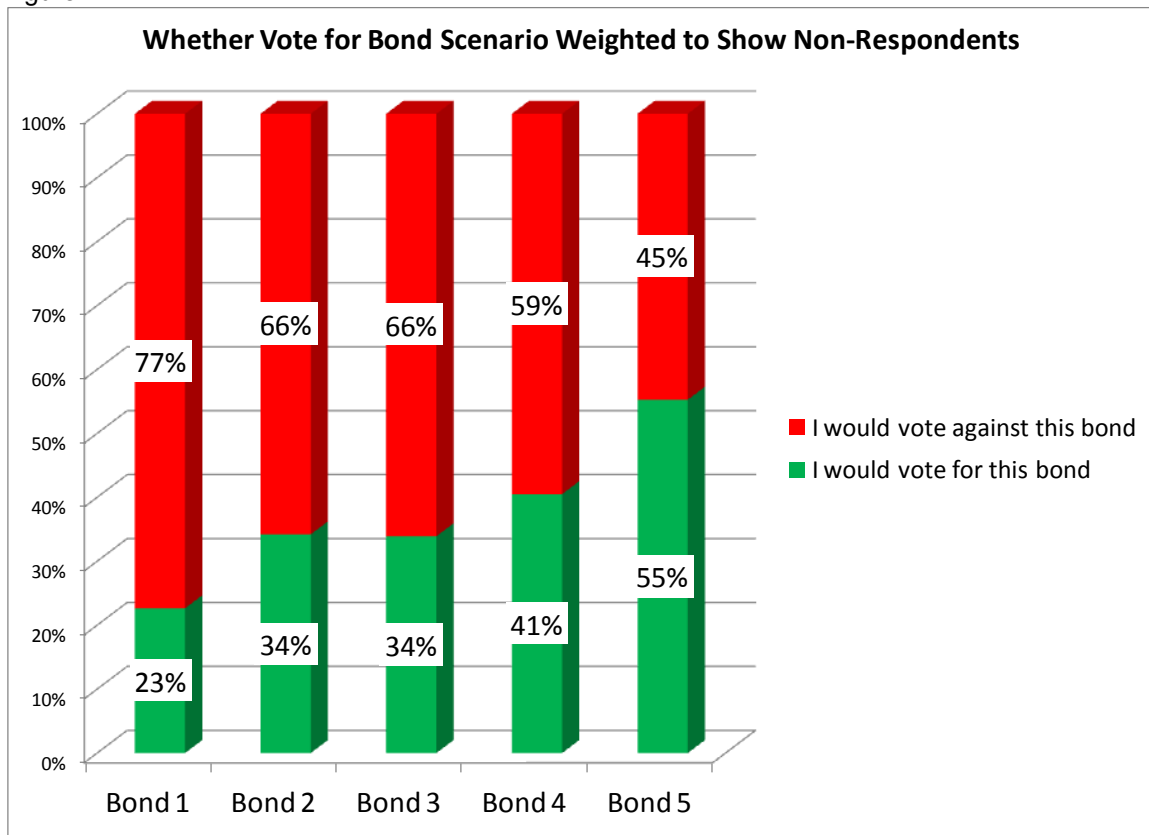


Figure 12 shows the results after the non-respondents were theoretically assigned a vote based on the discrepancies shown in Figure 11. The model closely mirrors the results shown in Figure 9, where the percentages of just those responding to the survey question are computed. Figure 12 shows slightly higher percentages, with estimates for Bonds 3, 4 and 5 two percentage points higher and estimates for Bonds 1 and 2 only about one percentage point higher. This model also predicts that Bond 5 would likely pass, and Bond 4 would be more likely to fail. Bonds 2 and 3 would have little chance of mustering a majority vote. Bond 1 would almost certainly fail.

Figure 13

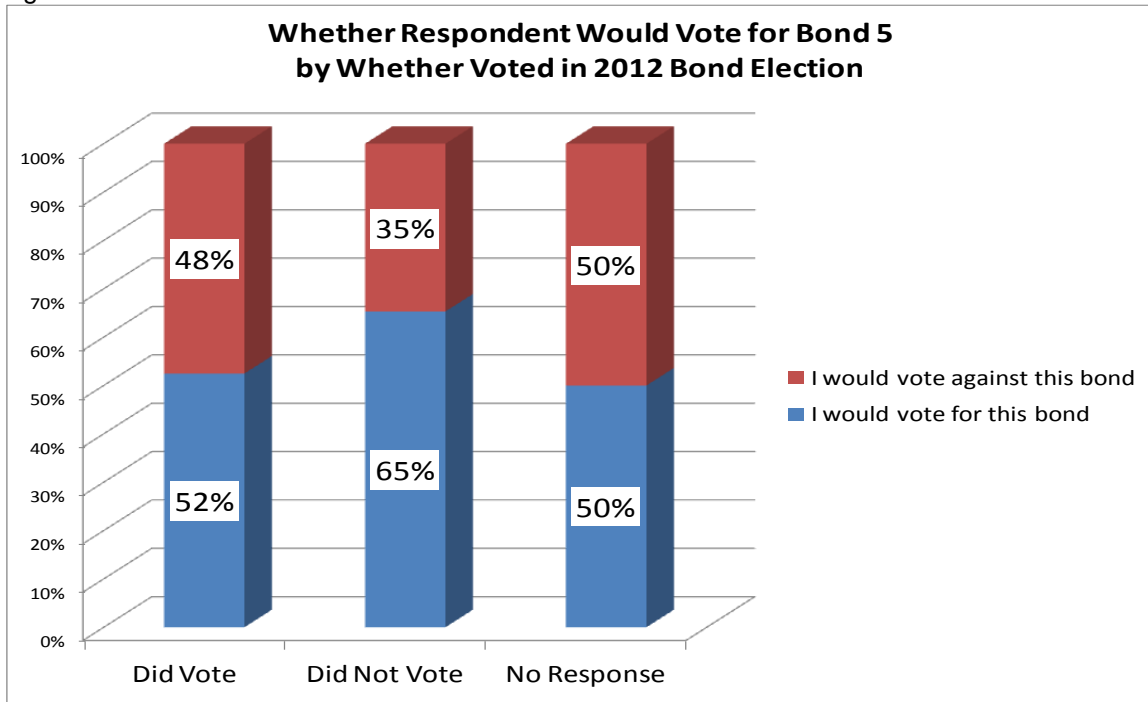


Figure 13 shows the difference in support for Bond 5 between those who said they voted in the summer 2012 bond election, those who said they did not and those who did not report whether they voted. It shows considerably higher support among non-voters and slightly less for non-reporters. These data suggest that efforts to maximize the vote will increase the probability that Bond 5 would pass in a future election.

Figure 14

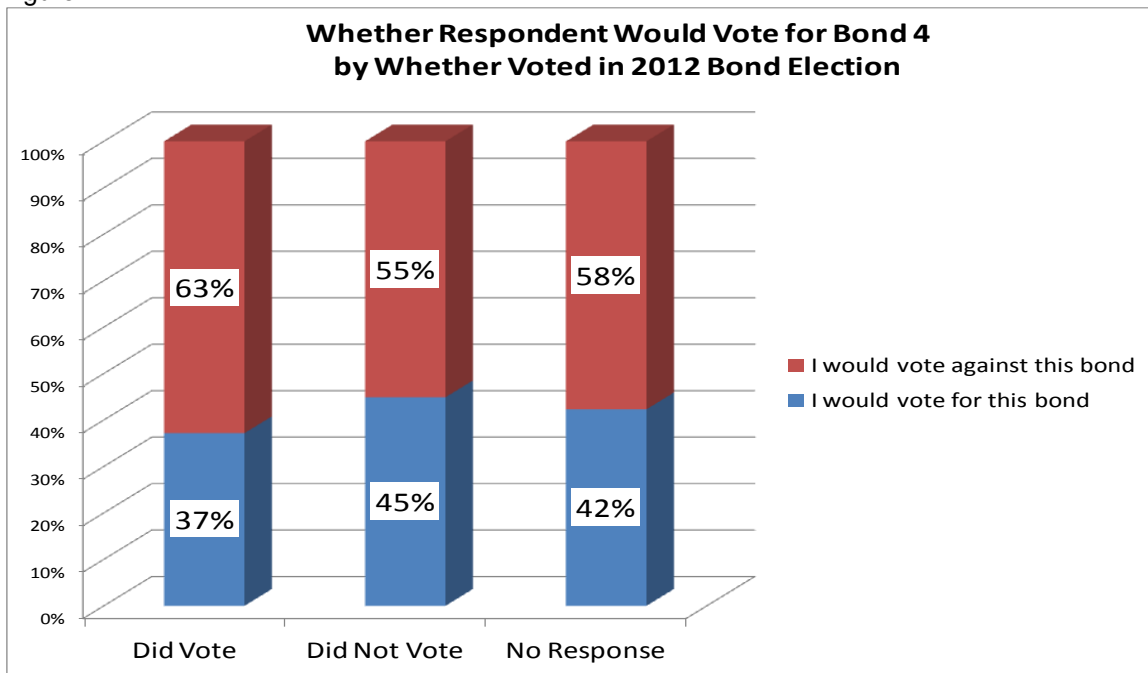


Figure 14 shows that support for Bond 4 was also higher among non-voters than voters, as was also true for non-reporters. Although efforts to get out the vote might increase the “yes” votes, this strategy is unlikely to garner majority support for Bond 4.



Figure 15

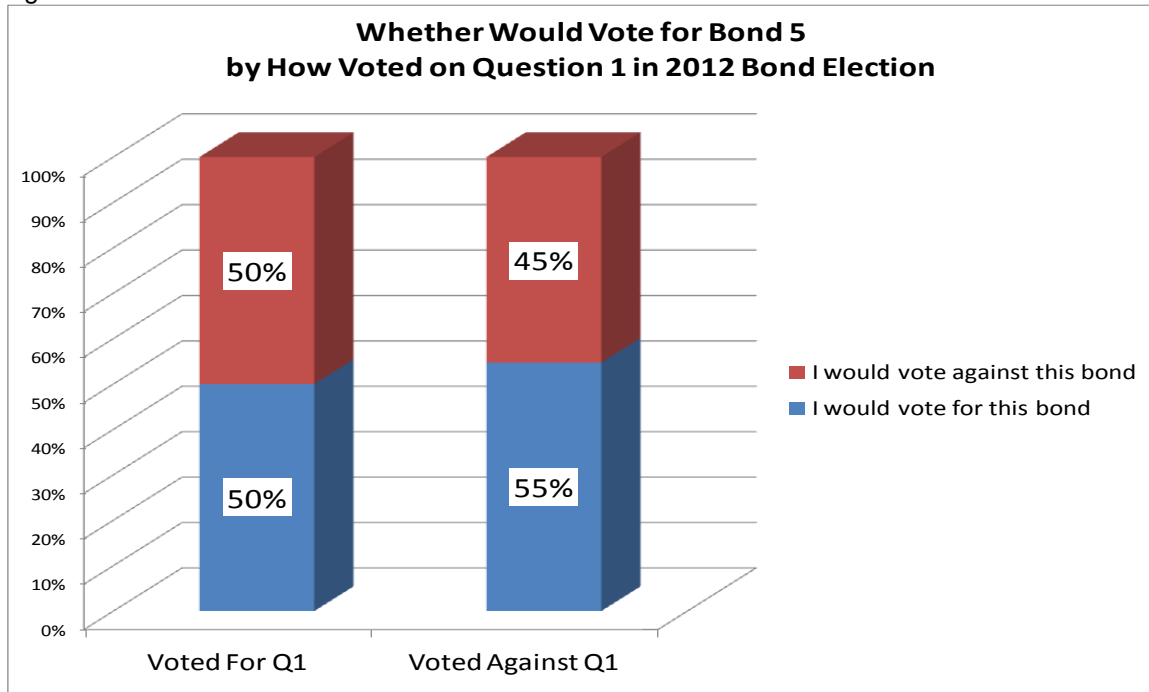


Figure 15 shows the difference in support for Bond 5 between respondents who said they voted against Question 1 in the summer 2012 bond election and those who said they voted for it. Interestingly, those who voted against Question 1 in 2012 were more likely to say they would vote for Bond 5 than those who voted for Question 1.

Figure 16

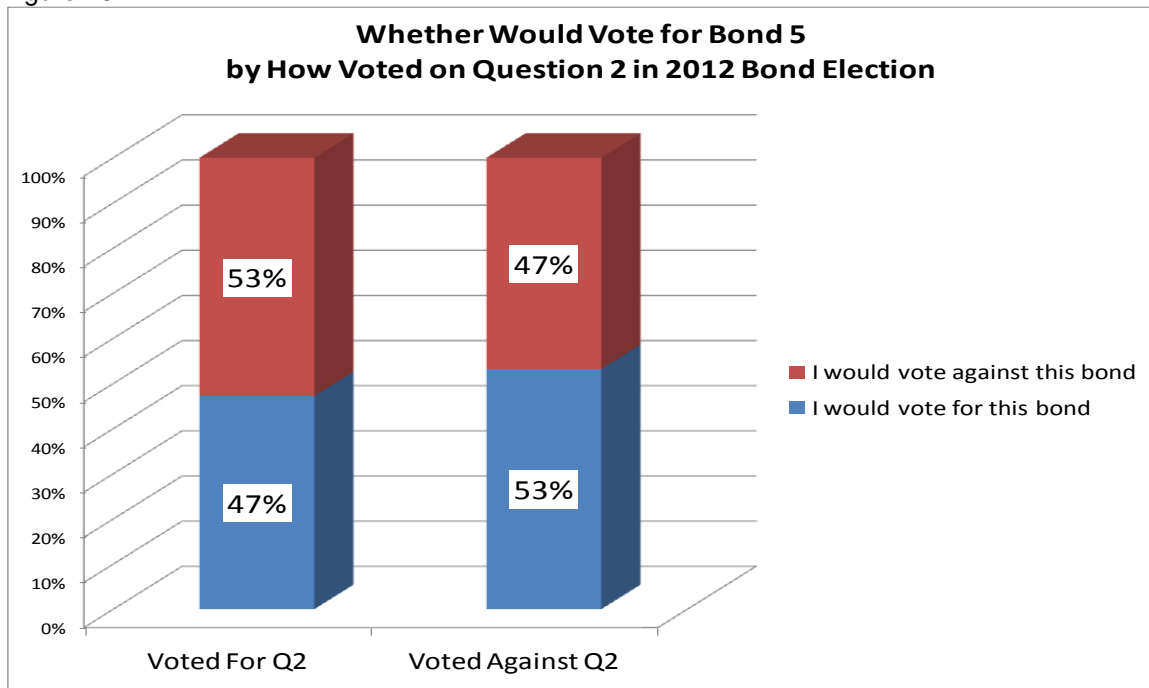


Figure 16 shows the difference in support for Bond 5 between respondents who said they voted against Question 2 in the summer 2012 bond election and those who said they voted for it. We see a similar effect, in that those who said they voted against Question 2 were more likely to say they would vote for Bond 5 than those who said they voted for Question 2.

Figure 17

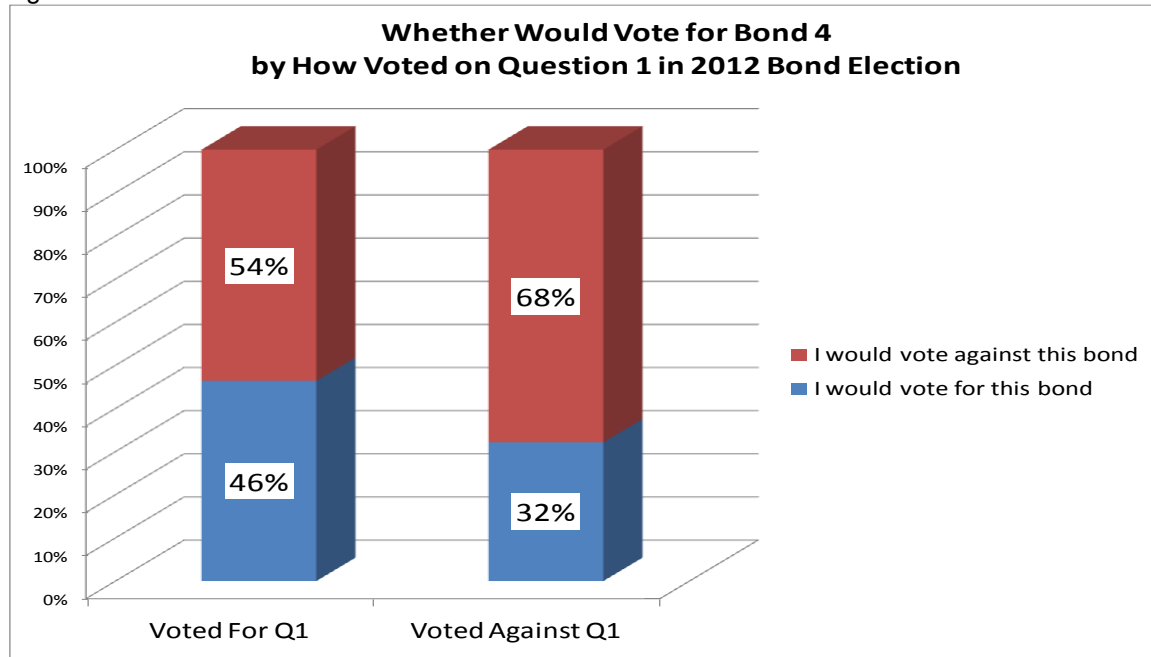
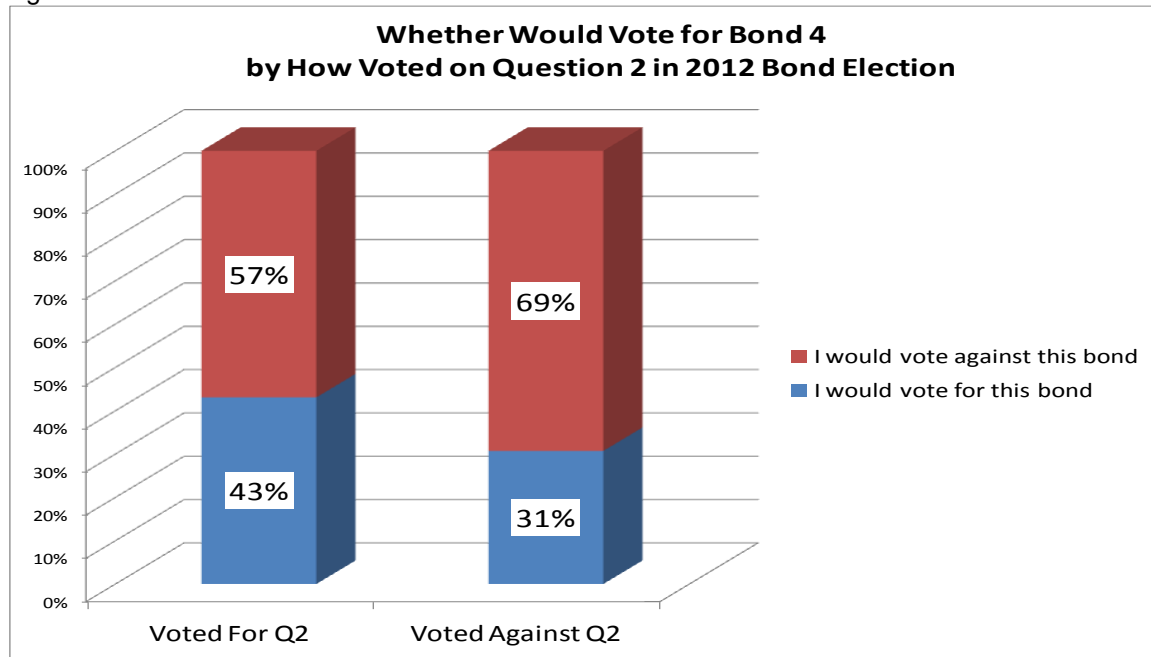


Figure 17 shows the difference in support for Bond 4 between respondents who said they voted against Question 1 in the summer 2012 bond election and those who said they voted for it. Contrary to the results from Bond 5, those voting against Question 1 were significantly less likely to support Bond 4 than those who voted for Question 1.

Figure 18



Similarly, respondents who said they voted against Question 2 in the summer 2012 bond election were also less likely to say they would vote for Bond 4 in a future election. These results suggest that many voters are sensitive to the cost of a bond initiative. They voted against Questions 1 and 2 because of the cost. They were willing to support Bond 5, which would cost significantly less than Questions 1 and 2, but voted against Bond 4, which would involve a cost much closer to that of Questions 1 and 2.

## Prediction Models

An attempt is made here to construct a model based on individual ratings that will explain respondents' support for or opposition to a particular bond scenario. The model produces a bond score for each respondent that is equal to the sum of all ratings for projects included in that particular bond. Bond 5 includes 1) upgrading the HVAC for the elementary, junior high and senior high schools, 2) plumbing, lighting and electrical upgrades, and 3) replacing the windows and blinds at East Elementary. Each respondent's ratings for these projects are summed. Those who rated all of the projects highly will have a high positive score. Those who rated most positively and some negatively will have a low positive score. Those who rated half of the projects positively and the other half negatively will have a score near 0. Those rating most of the projects negatively will have a low negative score, and those who rate all of the projects negatively will have a high negative score. It is assumed that the higher the positive value of the respondent's score on this model variable, the more likely the respondent would vote for that bond. The results for Bond 5 are shown below.

Figure 19

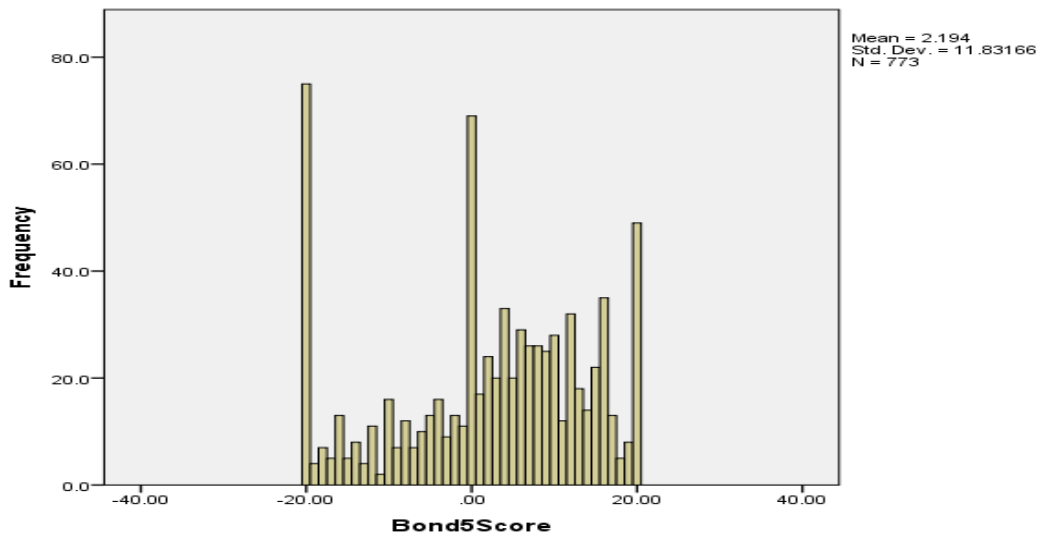


Figure 19 shows significantly more positive scores than negative scores for Bond 5, with a mean rating of + 2.194. Fifty-seven percent of respondents had positive scores, very close to the 55% predicted by the weighted vote shown in Figure 11.

Figure 20

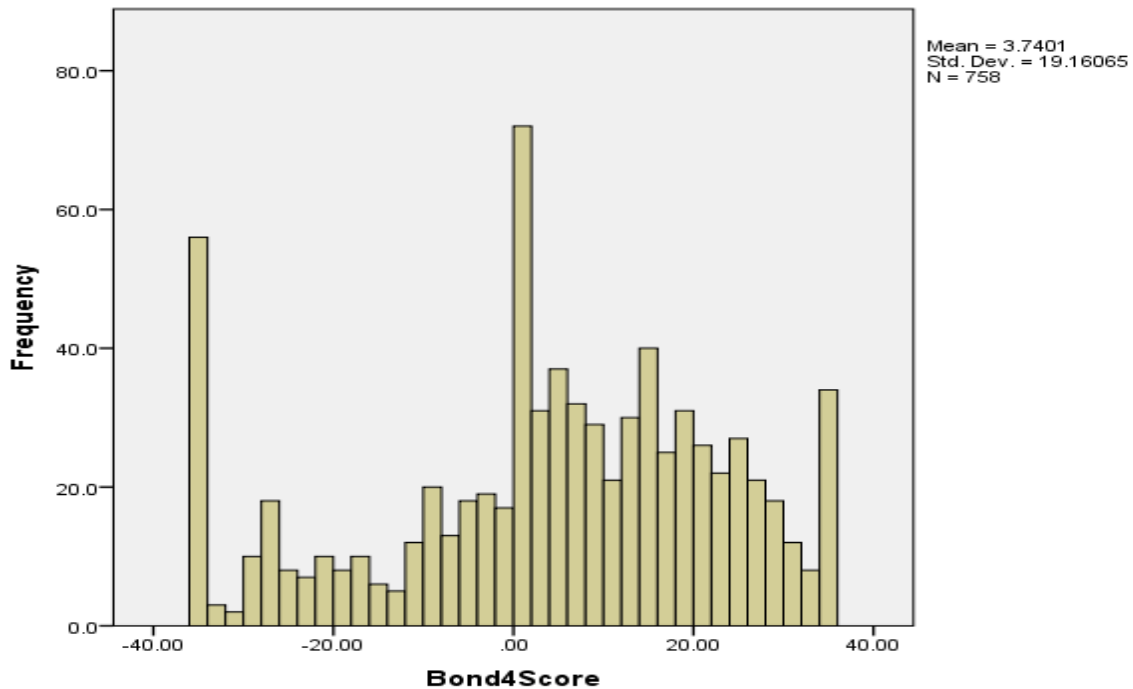


Figure 20 shows the results of Bond 4, which adds roof replacement for the high and junior high schools, exterior building repairs at both buildings, replacing the elementary bleachers and playground equipment and replacing the bleachers at the junior high, high school and stadium. This model produced even higher levels of support, with a mean of + 3.74. Fifty-eight percent of respondents had a positive score for this model, suggesting that voters would support it. However, when asked directly whether they would support this bond, only 38% said they would vote for it. Even though the weighted estimate includes an additional 3% of non-respondents who would likely vote for this bond, the model still overestimates the percent who would vote for Bond 4 by 17%. This suggests to the researcher that another factor is dissuading voters from committing to Bond 4. They are highly supportive of the additional projects, but will not commit to voting for a bond to fund them.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to make accurate projections of a prospective bond election for Unified School District 109. The decision to vote and what or who to vote for involve many factors. Typically, only 25% to 64% of eligible voters will vote in a given election. Elections where only a bond issue is being decided typically yield turn-outs at the low end of this range. This study assumes that those most likely to expend the time to go vote in a bond election will also be most likely to participate in a bond survey similar to the one conducted for this study. Based on past voter turnout in Republic County, it is estimated that at least half of those who would vote in a future bond election responded to the survey. It is uncertain whether voters who did not respond to the survey will vote the same way that respondents will vote, but intuition would suggest that non-respondents to the bond survey would tend to be less politically active.

Direct measures of likely voting behavior showed that only Bond 5 would garner majority support. Theoretical ascription of non-respondents puts support for Bond 5 well over 50%. Support for the remaining bond scenarios is estimated to be between 22% and 41%, suggesting that these bonds would not receive majority support in an election.

In-depth analysis showed unusually high support for most of the improvement projects, with over half of respondents rating all but 3 of the projects positively. High levels of support for the 4 projects in Bond 5 were accompanied by a high proportion indicating they would vote for this bond. However, adding additional projects that also garnered high support, Bond 4 lowered the proportion who said they would vote in favor to well below majority support. This suggests to the researcher that voters perceive the needs, but do not feel they are in a position to accommodate those needs at this time. Recently enacted state level taxation policies may be creating uncertainty in the minds of local voters, who may already be anticipating increases in property and sales taxes as a result of these new state-level tax policies.

## Appendix A: Bond Scenarios

### Bond 1

A school bond to construct at a new site a highly secure pre-kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade campus including development of the site, classrooms, support areas, administrative and district offices, district-wide technology upgrades, gymnasiums, athletic fields, and related costs. Approximate cost: \$26,000,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$356/Year or \$29.66/Month

### Bond 2

A school bond to construct a highly secure pre – kindergarten to sixth grade classroom addition to the south of Republic County Junior and Senior High School, including a secondary / practice gymnasium, renovation and expansion of the central kitchen, new kitchen equipment, earthwork, renovation of the RCJSH entry way and administrative offices for security purposes, district-wide technology upgrades, and other miscellaneous costs. Approximate cost: \$12,150,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$160/Year or \$13/Month

### Bond 3

A school bond to construct a highly secure 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom addition to the south of Republic County Junior and Senior High School that would separate the buildings by a vestibule, including a secondary / practice gymnasium, renovation and expansion of the central kitchen, new kitchen equipment, earthwork, renovation of the RCJSH entry way and administrative offices for security purposes, district-wide security upgrades and other miscellaneous costs. Approximate cost: \$6,180,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$75/Year or \$6/Month

### Bond 4

In addition to the improvements under scenario number 5, below, a school bond to add the roof replacement at Republic County Junior and Senior High School, exterior building repairs at both buildings, and replacements and upgrades to the East Elementary bleachers and playground equipment, and the wooden bleachers at the Republic County Junior and Senior High School football and track stadium. Approximate cost: \$5,256,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$62/Year or \$5/Month

### Bond 5

A school bond to upgrade East Elementary and Republic County Junior and Senior High School's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, plumbing, lighting and electrical upgrades, and replace East Elementary building windows and blinds. Approximate cost: \$4,056,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$45/Year or \$4/Month

## Appendix B: Survey Instrument

### USD 109 Voter Preference Survey

One of the main decisions that must be made is whether to 1) maintain the current two school sites; East Elementary and Republic County Junior and Senior High School, OR 2) consolidate all grades (pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup>) into one campus. Do you favor:

- Maintaining the current two campus system or
- Consolidating all grades (pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup>) into one campus?

Another difficult decision that must be made is whether USD 109 should 1) continue repairing buildings as the need arises to maintain current facilities OR 2) invest in brand new facilities. Which overall strategy do you believe should be pursued?

- Continue repairing buildings as the need arises to maintain current facilities
- Invest in brand new facilities

How concerned are you that declining enrollments and funding may force USD 109 to be consolidated with adjacent school districts?

- Not Concerned at All     Somewhat Concerned     Very Concerned

Next to each item listed, please indicate by **circling the number** on the scale indicating your personal level of support or opposition for each proposed need. See the back of the cover letter to read more about what each item involves and what it would cost.

	Strongly Oppose					Neutral			Strongly			
Support												
East Elementary HVAC Upgrade	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Republic Co. Jr/Sr High HVAC Upgrade	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Plumbing/Lighting/Electrical Upgrades	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
East Elementary Entrance Security	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Republic Co. Jr/Sr High Security Upgrade	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
District Wide Technology Upgrade	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
East Elementary Windows & Blinds	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Republic Co. Jr/Sr High Secondary Gym	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Add and Improve Kitchens & Cafeterias	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Exterior Building Repairs	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Bleachers and Playground Equipment	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
Roof Replacement (Both Buildings)	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

Please read the following potential school bond proposals and tell us whether you would be more likely to vote **for** or **against** each if it alone was presented in an upcoming bond election.

1. A school bond to construct at a new site a highly secure pre-kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade campus including development of the site, classrooms, support areas, administrative and district offices, district-wide technology upgrades, gymnasiums, athletic fields, and related costs. Approximate cost: \$26,000,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$356/Year or \$29.66/Month
  - I would vote **for** this bond
  - I would vote **against** this bond

2. A school bond to construct a highly secure pre – kindergarten to sixth grade classroom addition to the south of Republic County Junior and Senior High School, including a secondary / practice gymnasium, renovation and expansion of the central kitchen, new kitchen equipment, earthwork, renovation of the RCJSH entry way and administrative offices for security purposes, district-wide technology upgrades, and other miscellaneous costs. Approximate cost: \$12,150,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$160/Year or \$13/Month

I would vote **for** this bond  I would vote **against** this bond

3. A school bond to construct a highly secure 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom addition to the south of Republic County Junior and Senior High School that would separate the buildings by a vestibule, including a secondary / practice gymnasium, renovation and expansion of the central kitchen, new kitchen equipment, earthwork, renovation of the RCJSH entry way and administrative offices for security purposes, district-wide security upgrades and other miscellaneous costs. Approximate cost: \$6,180,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$75/Year or \$6/Month

I would vote **for** this bond  I would vote **against** this bond

4. In addition to the improvements under scenario number 5, below, a school bond to add the roof replacement at Republic County Junior and Senior High School, exterior building repairs at both buildings, and replacements and upgrades to the East Elementary bleachers and playground equipment, and the wooden bleachers at the Republic County Junior and Senior High School football and track stadium. Approximate cost: \$5,256,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$62/Year or \$5/Month

I would vote **for** this bond  I would vote **against** this bond

5. A school bond to upgrade East Elementary and Republic County Junior and Senior High School's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, plumbing, lighting and electrical upgrades, and replace East Elementary building windows and blinds. Approximate cost: \$4,056,000. Approximate property tax increase for a \$75,000 home: \$45/Year or \$4/Month

I would vote **for** this bond  I would vote **against** this bond

Please indicate whether you voted in the fall 2012 school bond election.

Did Vote -----> Did you vote for or against Question #1?

Voted For  
 Voted Against

Did Not Vote

Did you vote for or against Question 2?

Voted For  
 Voted Against